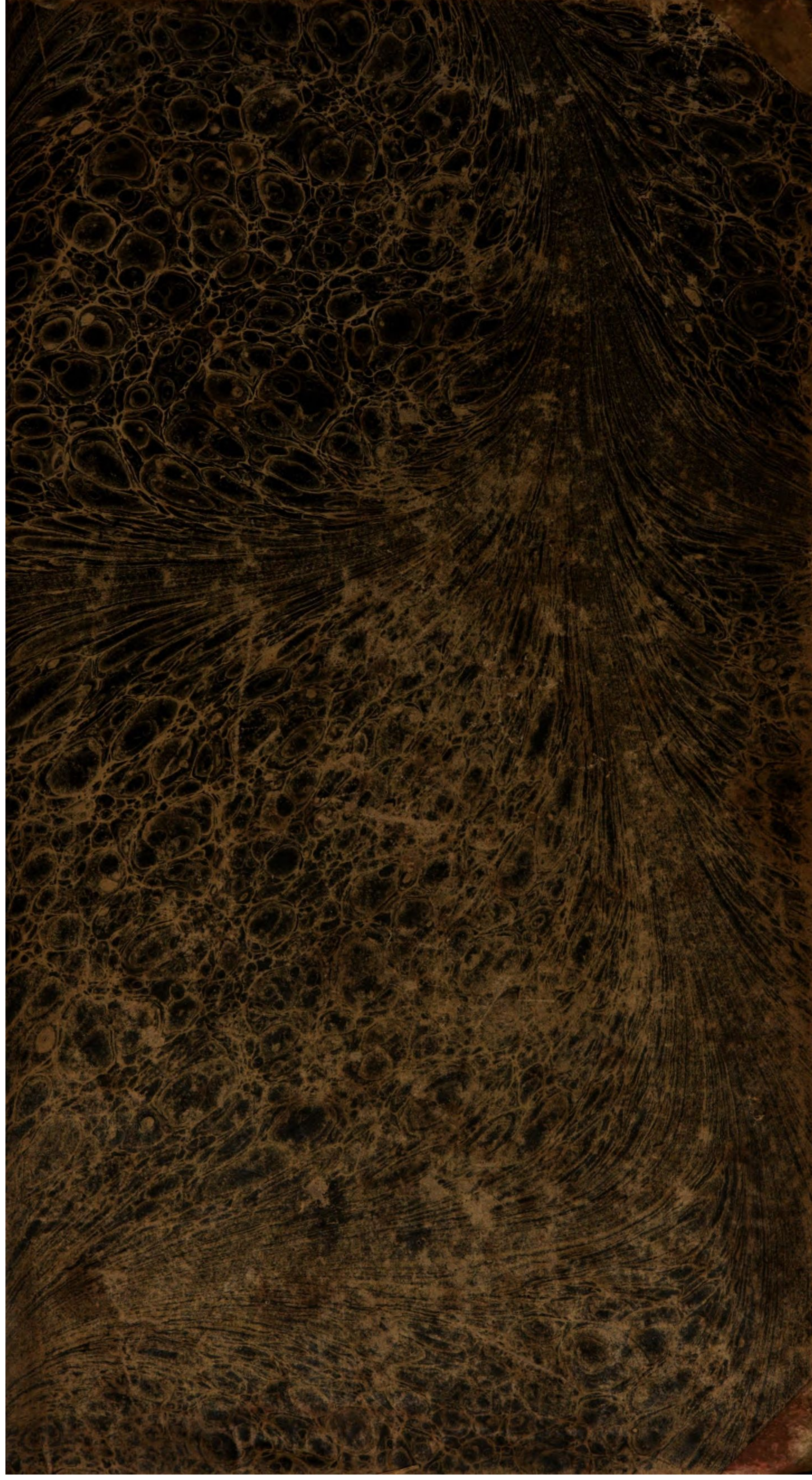
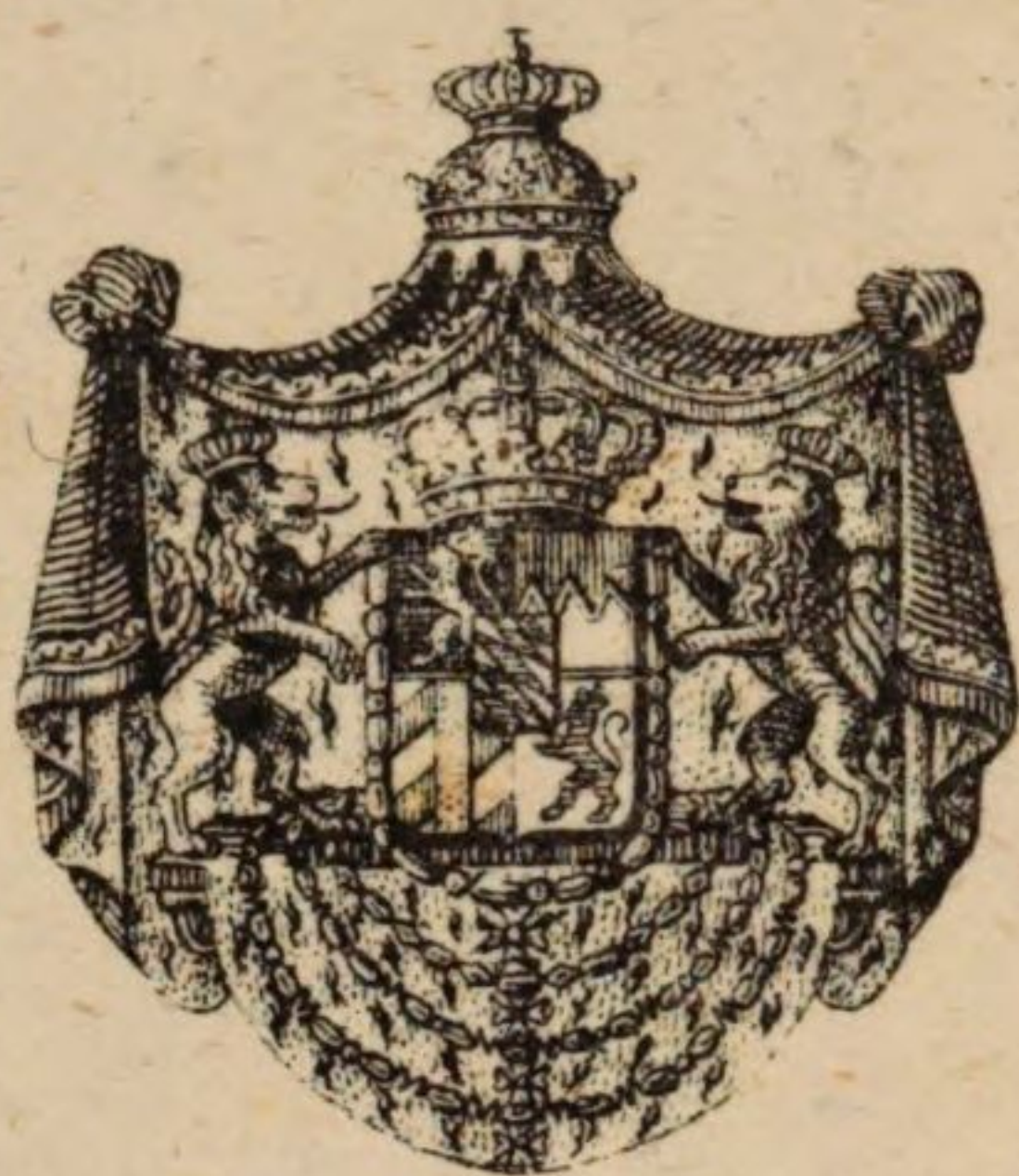




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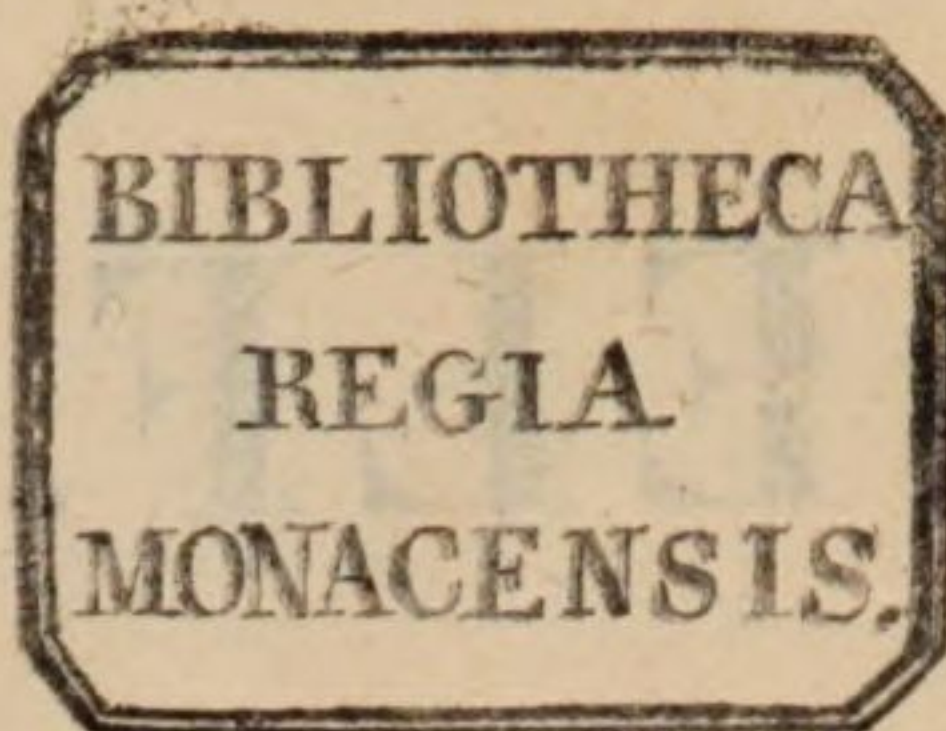
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1865

ADDRESS TO THE PUBLIC.

CECIL CECILIZETH.

Could you but surmise, dear public, the grateful and devoted affection which your partiality has engendered in my heart, you would give me credit for the tears which at this moment obscure my eyes, while shaking hands with you after so long an absence! To *me* what a public have you been;—how bountiful,—how indulgent!—Your hand, again, old fellow!—I did not think to be so overpowered by my feelings.

The emotions I experience, and which I cannot doubt to be reciprocal, convince me, however, that I have done amiss in attempting to amuse you by other adventures than my own. I feel that it is of your own Cecil you are wanting to hear, and that of *him* you could never hear too much; whereas, the critical machines that pretend, by their uncouth signals, to telegraph your opinions, — Examiners — Spectators — Athenæums — Atlases—John Bulls, — had succeeded in convincing me that you appreciate only what is set down with the dry circumstantiality of a coroner's inquest,—that you have denounced my naïveté as egotism, — and declared me unequal to the narration of a sustained story. By such

calumnies,—invidious wretches!—did they betray me into the weakness of relating the history of one of my contemporaries; instead of delighting you with what Faulconbridge would call, “sweet poison for the tooth of age,”—namely, anecdotes of my simple self,—of whom, more hereafter.

You will admit, in the sequel, that I have done you notable service. Every now and then the age, like

The snake, sheds its enamelled skin,

and it is only by carefully collecting and comparing these relics, that its growth and progress can be appreciated. In 1845, selfishness is a sufficiently prevailing vice. But my story will afford some comfort to the moralists, by proving that it was thirty times *more* flagrant, thirty years ago.

But though the dramatis personæ of the tale be new, and though I have endeavoured to vindicate your much-traduced Cecil from the charge of selfishness, by exhibiting the portrait of a *real* egotist,—the antithesis of *his* generous nature,—the style, the thoughts, the moral, the malice, are those of the object of your pristine affection. In these days of universal scribbledom when, as in those of Horace, *Scribimus indocti doctique*, your mind has been distracted by counterfeits.—But I flatter myself *my* powers of pen are unmistakeable.

You have often heard, dear public, of an Irish peer, privileged, like the grandees of Spain, to wear his hat before the king.—But do you know why?—Probably not!—for the cheap-edition-mongers have so vulgarized English history, by compressing into your brains and

libraries the works of Hume complete in half-a-dozen penny numbers, that you are no longer able to distinguish between William IV. and William the Conqueror!

By the sagacity of the booksellers, however, the price of that inestimable work, the Peerage, is still kept up. Take, therefore, Burke's Peerage and open it at K for Kingsale,—where you will find set down how his lordship's ancestor, the gallant Earl of Ulster,—(the Cecil of his day,)—liberated by king John from captivity in the Tower of London, to take up the gauntlet flung down by Philip Augustus, when he proposed to decide by single combat the quarrel between England and France, bore such terrors in his name and aspect, that, at the last sounding of the trumpets, the French champion put spurs to his horse, and left him master of the lists!

Desirous, however, of witnessing some token of his far-famed strength, Philip caused a helmet of proof to be placed on a wooden block, (as we now occasionally place a judicial wig,) which the Earl of Ulster cleft asunder at a blow—leaving the sword embedded in the wood!

And *who* was to extricate the weapon?—The united chivalry of France,—king—courtiers—knights and squires,—all tugged at it, and tugged in vain.—When behold, at the powerful touch of its master, it glided forth as lightly as from a golden scabbard!—The old story, dear public, of Ulysses and his bow.

Need I suggest a deduction?—Surely your sagacity must discern that the weapon so long left sticking in

the block of your favour, has been at length drawn forth by the only hand capable of striking it so deep, or redeeming it for new feats of valour.

Here I am again, sword in hand! — As the Roman says in the play, and Sir Robert in the house,—“ Lend me your ears!” (they are long enough to spare some portion to a friend!)

Sit mihi fas audita loqui,

and in the following pages you shall find the pen of the Coxcomb flourished with all its original grace and spirit, by the unique and solely-competent hand of

THE AUTHOR OF CECIL.

SELF.

CHAPTER I.

O sæclum insipiens et inficetum!

CATULLUS.

Alas! for the circulating libraries,—the day of the novelist is done!—Our locomotive age has outstripped his sedentary calling. Few have leisure to write,—few even leisure to read. Steam has realized the phrase of Corporal Trim, that—“we are here now and gone in a moment :”—and it is consequently as easy, and twice as edifying, to survey the romance of life with our simple optics, as through the reflecting glasses of the press.

Thanks, moreover, to the march of civilization, privacy has been exploded among us, and individuality effaced. People feel in thousands, and think in tens of thousands. No quiet nook of earth remaining, for the modern Cincinnatus to cultivate his own carrots and opinions;—where humour may expand into excrescence, or originality let grow its beard! Robinson Crusoe’s island has been invaded by missionary societies, or colonization committees;—and, even in our scarcely less barbarous midland counties, railroads are cutting their way into the heart of Harlowe Place, and puffing their desecrations into the venerable face of Grandison Hall. The word “tender” has acquired, in modern parlance, a sense that would have distracted the chivalrous author of the “Arcadia;” nor is there a vicarage in the land sufficiently remote from the shriek of the engine-driver, to foster the ingenuousness of a Dr. Primrose.

No matter!—Certain among us are old enough to remember those inartificial days of slow coaches and turnpike-gates, when country families wore their own unsophisticated hearts and minds; instead of having their sentiments down from town, every morning, ready frizzed, by the early train; and what writer in his senses would exchange a whole shire traversed by a railroad and its branches, for a homely parish, such as Edenbourne presented at the commencement of the present century; when its heavy wagon made a three

days' journey from the metropolis, and even the great Don at the Castle was forced to sleep a night on the road.

Edenbourne, though on the borders of Wales, has been brought of late within eight hours' range of London; and receded more miles than Babbage could compute, from the kingdom of Heaven. But before all trace be obliterated of the simplicity of its good old times, come forth, thou gray goosequill, and let a few of thy random flourishes redeem its insignificance from oblivion!—

In those days when, by act of parliament and the grace of royal birthdays, the London season commenced in January, and ended in June, the mere announcement at Edenbourne, every summer, that “the family had arrived at the castle,” sufficed to certify to the anxious neighbours that Lord and Lady Askham were settled at headquarters for the six months ensuing;—prepared to inflict or undergo the *peine forte et dure* of formal dinner-parties. No flying about, as now, from the county of Devon to that of Durham, to dash for a day or two into the brilliant festivities of the Duke of this, or Marquis of the other. After the example of Windsor and Frogmore, every man's house was then his *home*,—the place appointed for him to live and die in,—a scene of sober-suited happiness, where punctuality to the bell announcing breakfast, dinner, and family prayers, constituted the chief duty of the day; and the arrival of a monthly-nurse, with caudle and christening cap, the grand event of the year.

It required, however, no great stretch of moderation on the part of the Askhams to content themselves with Eden Castle. The domain was extensive, the house stately and spacious. The neighbouring borough was of Lord Askham's way of thinking in politics, for he returned its member; the neighbouring parsonage of his own persuasion in religion, for he nominated its rector. His park boasted the finest breed of deer in the county, his rent-roll the most punctual race of tenants. A large family of children supplied a variety of domestic interests; and so engrossed was his lordship in giving the law absolute to his steward and bailiff, and her ladyship to the tutor, governess, and head-nurse, that they seldom found time to lament the badness of the roads, or thinness of the neighbourhood.

Throughout the autumn, indeed, large parties succeeded each other at the castle; but chiefly composed of family connexions; people of the same high caste and domestic habits as the Askhams, who found sufficient pastime at Edenbourne in making acquaintance with the beauties of the place,—the children, plantations, and experimental farm.

Incapable of supplying a new emotion or idea to their noble kindred, they were not likely to suggest the moral deficiencies of the place!

Unluckily, Lord and Lady Askham were cousins; born of the same blood, bred with the same prejudices,—so that there was nothing in the nature of the one to counteract the errors of the other;

and their virtues and weaknesses being identical, and consequently mutually imperceptible, no chance of amendment! The horizon that contented both was a narrow one; the sole object of their existence to escape blame in this world, and condemnation in the next;—a purpose they held to be accomplishable only by keeping under iron subjection those gentler instincts of the heart, which, over indulged, are apt to become elements of perdition.

Like the saints of old, they fortified their selfish sanctity in solitude. Eden Castle stood isolated in its neighbourhood, like a hermitage in the desert. Satisfied that truth and justice in all their dealings insured its respect, the Askhams cared little for its affections; and as there was no family of their own rank in life within visiting distance with hereditary claims upon their sympathy, they took no more heed than the grand Turk of what was passing beyond their park palings.

Reserved and taciturn, Lord Askham attributed to philosophical moderation that total abstinence from political and courtly life, which was the result of constitutional shyness. Though as staunch a Tory as the terrorism of those revolutionary times could render a man of his property, he contented himself with demonstrating his attachment to church and state by a bis-annual appearance at the levee,—by holding his borough at the disposal of the “heaven-born minister,” and paying down his taxes like a man,—ay, and a man of thirty thousand a year!

And thus, his lordship's dryness of nature being unmitigated by the amenities of the courtier as well as unmoistened by the Great-British humanities of sportsmanship, his gravity of deportment increased with his years; doing far greater credit to the magistrates' bench, than to the hilarity of his dinner-table, or cheerfulness of his fire-side. Children ceased to be children in his presence. His grown-up sons addressed him in the tone of dependents; and the few families of the neighbourhood occasionally invited to the castle, had very much the air of being brought there by the constable.

The character of the Askhams, however, stood high in the county. Eden Chase, with its thousands of acres, and Eden Castle, with its hundreds of ancestral portraits, constituted the grand features of the district; and veneration for the place was extended to its owners. To have attributed a fault to either, would have passed for flat blasphemy; not only with Dr. Hacket, the rector of Edenbourne, and Simprems, the apothecary; but with Mrs. Gwatkin, of Hexham Hall, and her quaint old brother, Sir Erasmus L'Estrange, who, though people of liberal fortune, had no higher ambition than to be invited once a year to the castle; to be frozen by the condescension of Lady Askham, and listen to his lordship's pompous protestations over his port, that he “would sacrifice the last guinea of his rent-roll to the support of the war, and the extermination of blood-thirsty France!”—

Cheered by his enlightened patriotism, they returned home convinced that if Old England had not the best of it against her "natural enemy," it would be no fault of Lord Askham; and that Chatsworth, Woburn, and Alnwick united, were unworthy to be placed in the scale against their own Eden Castle!

The first person who ventured to form a contrary opinion, was the heir-apparent to its honours. Like most spirited lads trammelled in leading-strings at home, Percy Askham had broken through all restraint the moment he reached Eton. At Oxford, he exceeded even the privilege of an elder son to be troublesome and expensive, (which the example of the heir-apparent of the kingdom had rendered patent in the land!) and though Lord Askham reckoned confidently on the penitentiary system of his methodical home to reclaim his prodigal son, so soon as he came to settle at Eden Castle, Percy entertained projects of a very different nature.

"Farewell, thou dreary pile!"—groaned he, as the postchaise in which he was proceeding to Oxford for his last term, turned the well-known corner at Edenbourne which excluded the castle from sight: "farewell, a long farewell to all thy dulness!—As Juliet says in the play, 'Heaven knows when we may meet again!'"

"It is well my father and mother do not hear you," said his grave brother Philip, to whom, with Siddonian emphasis, the apostrophe was addressed.

"On the contrary, 'tis deuced unlucky! If my father and mother heard such home-truths oftener, my dear Phil, their house would not be so much more boring than other peoples'. Between the toadying of their sycophantic neighbours, and the eternal laudations of our humdrum family chorus, they know no more of the world than if they lived in the Escorial!"

"And what should *we* gain by their being more worldly?" retorted Philip.

"A pleasanter home, in the first place!—Such slowness as that of Eden Castle is contagious as the plague; and in time, *we* shall become as moss-grown as our elders! In the second, my father and mother owe me some compensation for being one of ten children—a severe calamity, even under the most extenuating circumstances. But when made a pretext for converting the family seat into a boarding-school"—

"*I* never find the children in my way!" interrupted Philip, with some asperity.

"Nor I in *mine*.—I wish I did—poor things! What I complain of is, that the authors of our days have been listening for the last twenty years to the didactics of tutors and governesses, till everything in the establishment has been Mrs. Trimmerized to suit their notions! Life at Eden Castle is revised for the use of schools!"

"Time stands so still with my father, that he is apt to forget its

progress with ourselves," observed Philip, unwilling fully to confirm his brother's strictures.

"Why should we expect him to treat his sons better than he treats himself?"—cried Percy, ensconcing himself more snugly in the corner of the chaise. "Such a life as he chooses us to lead of it!—With such an income as his, a woman cook!—In such a county as ours, a subscription of five-and-twenty pounds to the hounds, instead of establishing the hunt at Eden Castle!—'Angels and ministers of grace defend us!'—Thirty thousand a year, and a pony to the fox-hounds!"—

"But since my father is not fond of hunting—"

"Spoken as becomes a younger brother!" cried Percy, slapping him on the shoulder; "and to reward your filial piety, my boy, henceforward you shall enjoy without a rival the delights of your *dulce domum*!—Long, long may you survive to comfort your afflicted parents for the loss of their graceless elder son!"

"What on earth do you mean, Percy?" cried Philip Askham, with an air of consternation.

"To go into a deep decline, my dear fellow, and be ordered to a milder climate; as my sole chance of escape from the never-to-be-sufficiently-yawned-at halls of my ancestors!" was the cool reply of the elder brother. "Know, sir, that my father's intentions towards me are of the most malignant nature. As soon as I have taken my degree, he proposes to bring me into parliament for Edenbourne, and Tommy-Goodchild me for the rest of my days under his own roof, both in Mansfield-street and Eden Castle."

"And what can you desire more?"

"I desire a great deal *less*!—Sooner volunteer into a marching regiment, or become mate of an Indiaman!—I have 'a truant disposition, good my lord;' and if condemned to fossilize at the castle, (as at present constituted,) will not answer for resisting my inclination to hire incendiaries, during some temporary absence of the family, and put an end to my sufferings!"

"A tour to a milder climate would certainly be a less *costly* alternative," said Philip, who had long ceased to argue with the extravagant flights of his brother.

"I may depend upon *you*, then, to attest a medical certificate of the weakness of my lungs?"

"Your own influence with my father will suffice,—the strength of which you have tried pretty severely!"

"I have done my best, certainly, to improve his lordship's education," said Percy, gravely; "but he does not get on as I could wish. *You*, my dear Phil, must complete his enlightenment. While I proceed to Lisbon or Madeira to take the chill off my constitution, you will naturally become all in all with Old Capulet and his lady."

Philip Askham shrugged his shoulders. He suspected that he was no great favourite with his parents.

“But that the property is so strictly entailed,” resumed the wild heir-apparent, “I should be afraid of giving you so immense an advantage over me. Make the most of it, however; for I admit that you deserve compensation for submitting to the severe infliction of our domestic felicity.”

An intimation such as this was of course regarded by Philip as the vapouring of an idle hour; and never was he more amazed than on learning from Lord Askham, soon after Percy quitted Christ Church, that he had received alarming hints from Simprems touching the health of his son.

“It seems that Percy’s chest has been delicate ever since his last attack of influenza,” said his lordship, in a tone of pique. “Vastly provoking, upon my word!—Just as I was on the point of bringing him into parliament!—He was well enough, Heaven knows, all the time he was at Oxford.”

Had Lord Askham’s regrets been expressed in a more kindly tone, the task of confederacy might have sat heavy on the soul of Philip. As it was, he felt entitled to hold his peace.

“Your brother has taken it into his head that nothing will do for him but the Mediterranean,” resumed the provoked father. “Mere prejudice—mere nonsense!—For my part, I have perfect faith in Devonshire. I have calculated the thing to a nicety; and it would cost me less to remove the whole family to Torquay for the winter, than run the risk of Percy’s extravagance abroad. Torquay brought round old Lady Lenitive, when condemned by the whole faculty!—Why don’t you answer, Philip? You *must* have heard the highest character of Torquay?”—

It had been useless to assure Lord Askham that, whatever the effect of the climate of Devonshire on Lady Lenitive, it would only serve to aggravate the disorder of his refractory son; and Philip was beginning to remonstrate seriously with the pretended invalid on the indecency of treating their father like a *père de comédie*, when lo! his scruples were relieved by the intervention of a great political event.

The peace of Amiens put an end to the outpouring of christian blood, and the perplexities of Eden Castle!—

An immediate migration of callow lordlings followed the opening of the continent; and as, among the noble cubs destined to be bear-led through the grand tour, was Lady Askham’s nephew, Lord Middlemore, a minor in the enjoyment of as many thousands a year as entitled him to the persecutions of a first-rate pedant, to the Rev. Dr. Dactyl was delegated the charge of both the cousins.

No possible plea for opposition! Percy Askham was taken in his own toils. His health and letters of credit were placed under the control of one with whom he saw it would be difficult to trifle; while, during his absence, as he had himself sagaciously predicted, Philip, instead of entering the diplomatic career for which he had been intended, was promoted to fill his brother’s place at Eden Castle.

CHAPTER II.

Cur alter fratrum cessare et ludere, et ungi,
Præferat Herodis palmetis pinguibus—

HOR. Ep. ii.

There is no flying hence or tarrying here.
I 'gin to be a-weary of the sun!

MACBETH.

Before six months had elapsed, though Mr. Askham's pathetic allusions, in his letters from the Continent, to the infirm state of his health, attested that his abhorrence of Eden Castle was undiminished, the prejudices of Philip in its favour had undergone considerable modification.

His disgusts, however, were not those of an elder son. He quarrelled neither with the homeliness of the table, nor the want of a kennel. The respectabilities of the place were not too tough for his digestion; but he was harassed by the arbitrary temper of his parents, and mortified by their reserve.

Nothing in the atmosphere of such a house to foster the better impulses of his age! All was leather and prunella. The Askhams took pride rather than pleasure in their children: — to rear them so as to confer honour on themselves, constituting *their* notion of the parental mission. Their inclinations were always overlooked — their faults, never. Some small measure of kindness, indeed, was evinced towards the alpha and omega of the family, — the heir-apparent in his box-coat, and babe in its robes, (like the softening words of endearment which begin and end the harshest letter). But with Philip commenced their system of discipline. While working him as hard as Caliban under the rod of Prospero, and rating him nearly as roundly, they protested that it was all from a sense of duty, lest he should be disqualified by a life of ease for the struggles and hardships allotted to younger brothers by the utmost rigour of the law.

The truth was that, disappointed in their hopes of seeing their eldest son take that early part in public life which his father had been too shy or indolent to hazard, they could not forgive Philip for standing in Percy's boots; and chose to visit upon *him* the ill-health of his brother.

It seemed almost too great a stroke of fortune for a second son to fulfil the quotidian duty of reporting the state of the glass, for the edification of his father, and skimming the daily papers, for the information of his mother; and instead of requiting his filial zeal by the intimacies of domestic companionship, they seldom ad-

dressed him at all, except to find fault. His sisters were still condemned to hard labour and solitary confinement in the school-room,—his brothers pursuing at Eton their arduous course of study in cricket, football, and boating; so that, embarrassed by the undilgent scrutiny of his parents, the companionless young man moped about the place he had so gratuitously defended against the animadversions of Percy, till his youthful spirits subsided, and his affections shrunk within him like the shrinking of a collapsed balloon.

Before the end of a year, the silent system had done its worst on Philip!—

The Gwatkins, of Hexham Hall, (an old mansion which, commanding an oblique squint of Eden Castle from a distant hill, felt privileged to discuss its economy,) often whispered, half inquiringly, half confidentially, to Simprens the Edenbourne apothecary, that “it must be a great comfort to poor Lord Askham to find his second son so steady, during the absence of his eldest.” But though rumours of the precarious state of the heir-apparent had considerably elevated Philip in the estimation of the neighbourhood as the presumptive representative of the family, neither the fifteen livings of which he was to be patron, nor the noble herd of deer whose haunches would lie at his disposal, gave them courage to invite him to their houses, except on occasion of the solemn dinner-parties dedicated to Lord and Lady Askham. Mrs. Gwatkin, though the mother of several marriageable daughters impatiently waiting the advent of St. Valentine, stood far too much in awe of the heads of the family, to affront them by unwarrantable attentions to their son.

On the mere hint of some such civility, Lady Askham had been heard to say, in her severest tone, that “it was impossible for Mr. Philip Askham to leave his father;” plainly intimating the slavish footing on which he was established under their roof.

If a letter were to be written, Philip must be at hand; if a petitioner to be denied, Philip must undertake the ungracious task; nor was Lady Askham able to surmise the meaning of the Court Circular, or his lordship to decide how many points the wind had veered to the south, unless their son held his eyes, ears, and understanding at their absolute disposal.

Even when, in his second year of domestic thralldom, his toils were lightened by the emancipation of his eldest sister from the school-room, to assist in answering notes and spelling newspapers, Lady Askham seemed afraid to let him off too easily.

“Philip is never in the house!”—she soon began to complain to Margaret, the new amanuensis. “He goes out an hour earlier than he used, and comes home an hour later. Nay, more than once, poor Lord Askham has had to worry himself to death, by writing excuses to County Meetings with his own hand! Most ungrateful

and unaccountable conduct,—and I shall take care to let Philip see that his neglect does not pass unnoticed.”

Home was accordingly made more uninviting than ever to the truant. The longer his absence, the longer, on his return, the accusing faces of his parents; till his sister, a kind-hearted but timid girl, beholding him an object of perpetual resentment, had scarcely courage to exchange a word with the delinquent.

“They care only for Percy!” muttered he, after a family dinner, during which nothing had been audible but the gingle of the family plate and wheezings of the family butler. “With Percy, they had enough to talk about; but whether I come or go, is a matter of indifference.—Were I to break my neck to-morrow, even Margaret would not shed a tear!—It is excusable, perhaps, in those toadying people at Hexham, or poor Simprens, to make a distinction between my brother and myself; for to *them*, twenty years hence, Percy will be an important neighbour.—But that parents should recognize a difference between their children!—that Margaret, a mere girl, should be so worldly!”

Misgivings of this sordid nature act upon the mind as parasite-plants upon a tree, exhausting its better qualities. Jealousy, and still meaner envy, gradually corroded his heart, till the growth of his natural affections was stunted. Even the fairest offspring of the human breast,—first love,—was cheated of its due proportions;—and, as the child of a deformed mother inherits her distortion, the Cupid of Philip Askham was born a cripple!

For, as will have been inferred by the experienced reader, the two hours *per diem* abstracted from his duty towards his father, were devoted to a woman!

Some three miles from the castle, engirded by the river Eden as with a silver sash, stood the demure little town of Edenbourne; having little beyond its post-office to recommend it to the neighbourhood, but charming the eye of the traveller by pleasant sites, diversified by picturesque limestone cliffs advancing like a rampart upon the river; with shrubby rocks intervening, and here and there a sunny orchard basking in ruddy luxuriance on the bank.

The landscape was fair to look on, and the road leading to it from the castle, through Eden Chase, the best bridle-road in the county; so that none but the toll-keeper of the turnpike road was justified in expressing surprise that Mr. Philip Askham should prefer its verdant solitudes for his daily exercise, to the king's highway. Nevertheless, the pertinacity of his visits to Edenbourne, *was* beginning to excite murmurs in the neighbourhood.

Among the lesser gentry, according to whose code the Askhams could do no wrong, (so completely had the rector of his lordship's nomination made it an article of religion with them to fear God, honour the king, and respect the Askhams!) much surprise was

expressed that a young man having that noble domain at his disposal, and that stately roof over his head, should find *any* society preferable to his charming home circle.

Even those on visiting terms at Eden Castle, Mrs. Gwatkin, and her quizzical old brother, Sir Erasmus L'Estrange,—even *they* who *were* occasionally admitted within that circle's icy precincts, where they could not but notice that Philip was the chartered drudge of the house, were puzzled to conceive what attraction could draw him, morning after morning, to the gate of a certain small tenement, called Eastfield, situated in the pleasantest suburb of Edenbourne; from which he was seldom seen to emerge before set of sun.

Mrs. Gwatkin, indeed, who, as the mother of three pensive spinsters, (one of whom, in so thin a neighbourhood, was obviously entitled to be fallen in love with by Philip Askham,) was so anxious concerning his proceedings, that she did her utmost to engage Sir Erasmus in unravelling the mystery. But the old gentleman,—a spare, arnotto-coloured bachelor of sixty-five, whose thin face was as much overgrown by his whisker, as his obscure name by an alphabet of initials, indicating his fellowship with all the learned societies of Europe,—(having been knighted by Georges III. in honour of six quartos of travels as dry as himself, written apparently to prove that he had traversed the four quarters of the globe without finding anything worth mentioning). The old gentleman was not to be moved by her inuendoes.—He had seen without emotion the Pyramids, and temple of Juggernaut; and when assured that “Mr. Philip Askham—poor infatuated young man—was wasting his life and credit with a lady living at Eastfield,”—replied, in his favourite phrase, that “he saw nothing in it.”

“*Nothing* in disgracing himself under the eyes of a family so respectable as his?”—cried Mrs. Gwatkin, with indignation.

“Why, what disgrace is there in visiting a lady who happens to live at Eastfield?” inquired Sir Erasmus, taking a third sniff out of his pinch of snuff.

“Cannot you imagine *the sort* of lady who must reside in such a place?”—exclaimed the swelling proprietress of a mansion making up sixteen best beds. “A cottage built by a retired tax-gatherer, on a bit of ground filched from the common!”—

“A vastly pretty bit of ground, and a neat cottage enough,” observed the man who had not only “swam in a gondola,” but hovelled in a bungalow.

“I grant you,—as lodge to a gentleman's park!” retorted his sister. “But it is partly *your* fault; for when the place was in the market, two years ago, you should have bought it, and thrown it into your own grounds. I took you to see it on purpose.”

“As I saw nothing in it, where was the use of throwing away four or five hundred pounds?”—

“To prevent our having a disreputable neighbour at our gates!—Perhaps, were you to visit Eastfield *now*, you *might* see something in it!”

“Improved, eh, by the new tenant?”

“I don’t know what you call *improvement*,” cried his sister, provoked by his obtuseness; “and as to the new tenant, who might pass for a school-girl, but that she is mother of two children——”

“A widow, eh?” interrupted Sir Erasmus, who took most sublunary matters on their own showing.

“She certainly *calls* herself *Mrs. Saville*,” replied his sister, without noticing his interruption. “But I dare say she has as much right to the name of Howard or Percy! My mind misgave me, indeed, that all was not as it should be, when I saw the place doing up, previous to her arrival. A productive kitchen-garden turned upside down, to give place to flower-beds and a pretence at a lawn;—and pink curtains, forsooth, at the drawing-room windows!”

“What is there in all that?” observed Sir Erasmus composedly.

“Her predecessor, though well to do in the world, was contented with white dimity!” replied the irate lady.—“It was her duty, moreover, (dropping from the skies into a strange neighbourhood without an introduction, and under suspicious circumstances,) to avoid everything likely to compromise her in the opinion of her neighbours.—The consequence of the sort of equivocal gentility affected by Eastfield is, that no one has visited this Mrs. Saville!”

“And does Mrs. Saville *desire* to visit any one?” demanded the matter-of-fact old bachelor.

“Apparently; since she is so fond of morning visitors, as daily to admit young Askham.”

“I see nothing in *that*!” retorted Sir Erasmus. “They were probably old acquaintance.”

“Old? Mrs. Saville cannot be more than one-and-twenty, (about the age of *my* Fanny,”) added Mrs. Gwatkin in a lower tone.

“Perhaps then she may be a poor relation,” persisted Sir Erasmus; better up in the pages of the Encyclopædia Britannica than those of Debrett.

“In that case,” rejoined his sister, “baskets of game and fruit would find their way from Eden Castle to Eastfield, instead of the second son.—Take my word for it, Lord Askham never so much as heard her name.—The worst of it is, that the Askhams (though I respect them from the bottom of my heart) are such unneighbourly people, that it is impossible to give them a hint on the subject, such as one should feel it a duty to afford to other parents under similar circumstances.”

“As to the circumstances, I see nothing in them,” retorted Sir

Erasmus; "and if the Askhams are uncivil, why trouble your head about their affairs?"

"Because, if some stop be not promptly put to Mr. Philip's proceedings, I foresee the most dreadful results!"

"Indeed?"—ejaculated her brother, *almost* excited by the solemnity of her tone.

"Unless his father and mother interfere, who knows but he may *marry* this Mrs. Saville?"

"And why not? I see nothing in it," replied the hardened tourist. "I have heard you assert that since his brother is so delicate, he *ought* to marry! You said so to himself, indeed, when we dined last year at Eden Castle."

"Because I thought him rather struck with Fanny, who is just the age for him!"

"So, you say, is Mrs. Saville."

"It is useless talking to you, brother, about such matters," cried Mrs. Gwatkin, rising angrily to depart; "of the world we live in, you know no more than a child! A family like the Askhams is not to be judged like the outlandish beings you may have met in a jungle,—or the boors of Tobolsk,—or any other of the savages in fur or feathers, among whom you dawdled away your youth. However, some day or other, you will be sorry enough when, instead of your niece Fanny, you see this adventuress settled at Eden Castle!"

"I promise you I should see nothing in it," was the rejoinder of Sir Erasmus, as she quitted the room; "for you tell me she is a pretty young woman; whereas poor Fanny is—but *that* is no fault of her's."

It might be that the maternal irritabilities of Mrs. Gwatkin were roused by the inference; for the following day, much as she stood in awe of Lady Askham, she proceeded to the castle for a morning visit, with the apple of discord in her pocket.

There was some difficulty, however, in bringing her batteries into play. Lady Askham became unapproachable the moment she assumed her airs of dignity; and on finding Mrs. Gwatkin of Hexham Hall, pretend to know more than herself concerning her son,—*her son Philip*,—she added a cubit to her stature.

Still, with the praiseworthy zeal of her calling, the mischief-maker persevered; till, by the earnestness of her revelations, she brought conviction to the mind of the distressed mother.

"Philip,—passing his life in clandestine intimacy with a young widow?—The demure reserved Philip, a libertine?—The heir presumptive to their honours about to become the prey of an adventuress?"—A thunderbolt falling on the roof-tree of Eden Castle could not have produced greater consternation!

This was the first remarkable event in the parental life of the Askhams, and they could not make enough of it! So bitter, indeed,

was their indignation, that their officious informant, terrified like the boy in the story book, by the sight of the devil she had raised, entreated them to make further inquiries, and exercise their personal judgment, before they proceeded to open their vials of wrath on the head of their son.

But alas! further inquiries served only to certify their injuries! It was easy to ascertain that Philip's leisure hours were spent at Eastfield;—that the owner of that rustic retreat was young and lovely;—and, having at length deputed their trusty Simprens to cross-question the Edenbourne attorney by whom her lease had been drawn up, it came to light that she was the widow of an officer in the Guards; whose family, disapproving his marriage, had turned their backs on her and her children.

Philip, it appeared, had accidentally shared the mail with them, one dreary night, the preceding winter; when Mrs. Saville was on her road to Edenbourne, to take possession of the new home she had been tempted by an advertisement to hire in a county as remote as possible from the scene of her early afflictions; and having kindly lent his furred cloak to the benumbed children on their journey, had called for it at Eastfield the following day, *of course* only to spare the bewildered stranger the inconvenience of despatching it to Eden Castle.

“And why did you never mention the circumstance to your mother or myself?” sternly demanded Lord Askham, after extorting this latter piece of information from the blanched lips of his son.

“Because you express a dislike to hearing any gossip about the people at Edenbourne,”—stammered Philip; “nor did I think it likely that your lordship or my mother could feel much interest in—in—a person so humbly situated as Mrs. Saville.”

“Not when she interests *you* so deeply, that you spend half your life in her company!”—cried the angry father. “Philip, Philip!—you are either an egregious dupe, or an abominable hypocrite! You are making a fool of this woman, or are made a fool of!—But let it go no further! So long as you abide under my roof, sir, I am answerable to the county for your moral conduct,—and will take care that it shall not disgrace us.—I desire that this dangerous intimacy may be broken off!”

CHAPTER III.

Quanto quisque sibi plura negaverit,
A Diis plura feret. HOR.

Cel. For his verity in love, I do think him as concave as a covered goblet or a worm-eaten nut.

Ros. Not true in love?

Cel. Yes, when he *is* in; but I think he is *not* in!

SHAKSPEARE.

Till the moment of this paternal explosion, Philip Askham had never looked steadily in the face the nature of his intimacy with Mrs. Saville;—perhaps because the subjection in which he was held, prevented his considering his soul (and its affections) his own;—perhaps because the multifarious avocations forced upon him left him little leisure for self-examination;—perhaps because the course of true friendship, which, *unlike* the course of a true love, *does* sometimes run smooth, had proved so soothing in its progress, as to lull him into temporary oblivion.

But, once roused by the thundering broadside of Lord Askham, no hope of further repose! He knew that the woman reviled by his father as seeking to entrap him, was as proud as she was poor,—and as poor as an income produced by the interest of five thousand pounds could make her;—and that, so far from having formed designs upon his heart, her own was buried in the grave of her husband.—Impossible to be more fondly devoted to the memory of the dead, than she to that of the young and gallant Edward Saville!

By a timely act of kindness to her children, Philip had recommended himself to her acquaintance; but so sincere was the young mother in her desire of seclusion, and so well aware that a life of retirement could alone secure a subsistence for her children out of her scanty fortune, that when her courteous fellow-traveller persisted in calling again and again at Eastfield,—on pretence of the loan of a book or newspaper,—or plants for her garden, or counsel for her furnishing,—his visits were felt to be an intrusion.

Neither by word nor look, had she ever encouraged his assiduities. It was only because he devoted himself so affectionately to the children and lightened the dreariness of their little lives, that his company was tolerated by the mother.

Then what,—since such the footing of their friendship,—*what* went he to seek at Eastfield? Simply a happier home than he left behind! The deportment of Mrs. Saville was so conciliating, and the welcome of the loving children so kind, that it seemed as if, in winter, all the sunshine of the earth were concentrated by her warm

fireside,—as in summer, upon her flowery lawn. At Eden Castle, not the vestige of a flower within half a mile of the house! At Eden Castle, not one cordial hand extended towards him! With the servants, he was “only Mr. Philip;” with his parents, only one of their younger sons. Even his pretty cousin, Helen Middlemore, when on a visit at the house, was kept by her prudent mother out of the way of a cousin so unavailable. How cheering therefore, after all his humiliations, to be smiled upon by so sweet a face as that of the gentle Evelyn Saville!

For she *did* smile upon him. She even made an *effort* to smile when her spirits were at the lowest, in compassion to the depressed air of a visitor who came to her harassed by his go-cart routine of domestic toil; and, after helping to place the children in the swing,—assisting the young widow in her flower garden,—or witnessing the progress of a Skye terrier, whose education constituted the chief diversion of little Edward,—so refreshed were the feelings of the Paria by an atmosphere of kindness and love, that if he did not return to the castle a wiser and a better man, he returned there twice as patient!

And now, after nearly a year’s enjoyment of these alleviations, he was suddenly ordered to renounce the society of one whose toleration had been an act of mercy!—But *how* was it to be done?—Though originally discouraged, he flattered himself his visits had now become habitual to *her*—indispensable to the children. If absent a day from Eastfield, he had to explain the reason. And how was he to make it apparent that, henceforward, he should return no more?

Never had the sunshiny pleasantness of the place assumed so powerful a charm, as in his solitary reveries during those first few tedious days he strove to stay away.—On attempting to turn his horse’s head in the opposite direction on entering Eden Chase, even the horse seemed of opinion that the great business of its life was to call upon Mrs. Saville; and in spite of bit and bridle, contended the matter, not manfully, but horsefully, with its master.

Nor did Lord and Lady Askham diminish his predilection for his Paradise Lost, by the sullenness through which they endeavoured to mark their deep sense of his misconduct. Never had the castle been more insupportable!—Even the neighbours, the Gwatkins and Sir Erasmus, Dr. Hackit and Simprens (a sort of Greek chorus to the family catastrophes, which supplied ohs! ahs! and alases! when any thing was amiss with the Askhams,) thought to recommend themselves to the great people, by coldness towards a son who was understood to be in disgrace.

By the end of a month, in short, Philip had pined and grumbled himself into a discovery that Eastfield was essential to his happiness.—But for the exile imposed upon him, he might never have ascertained it; but having boldly made the avowal to himself, one

day, while vainly trying to induce his horse to saunter along a dusty lane leading to Hexham, instead of cantering over the smooth green turf towards Edenbourne, off they started together, as by a common impulse; and, reckless of father and mother, threats of future disinheritance or present persecution,—Philip Askham abruptly made his re-appearance in the little drawing-room at Eastfield.

Perhaps, while ringing at the gate, he may have pictured to himself that his return was as important to the feelings of its mistress, as to his own; for he was grievously disappointed in the result. Though the children, climbing his knees, upbraided him with his long absence, not a tinge of emotion coloured the soft cheeks of their mother.

While with gentle courtesy she inquired what had kept him away, he watched her narrowly; his father's accusations half tempting him to fear—to hope—at all events to *believe*—that she might regard him with deeper interest than as a morning visitor.

But no! her mild grey eyes dwelt quietly on his own, her sweet voice remained undisturbed,—and the seam she was sewing exhibited the most pattern-like evenness of sempstressship. It was clear that his comings and goings possessed no stronger hold upon the heart of that unimpressionable being than those of Simprems the apothecary!

Philip Askham scarcely knew whether to be glad or sorry!—Within the last few days, while reflecting in his desultory rambles on the influence exercised over his mind by his intimacy at Eastfield, and his mechanical identification with the family, it had certainly glanced into his mind that to be an object of attachment to one so fair and gentle as that girlish widow, might be a more enchanting thing than was yet dreamed of in his philosophy; nay, he had detected himself in the weakness of exercising his arithmetic on the amount of their united incomes, as well as of the manifold virtues which enhanced her personal attractions.

But as, even *then*, he had admitted the folly of dwelling on the matter,—since, were she fifty times more graceful and amiable, she would remain an object of abhorrence at Eden Castle,—Philip had no excuse for the feeling of pique which mingled with his perception of her indifference.

So pre-occupied was his mind by his vexation at her *sang-froid*, that, for some minutes, he held Selina on his knee in silence, and allowed the playful endearments of her little brother to pass unnoticed.

“Are you ill, dear Mr. Askham, or angry with us?” inquired the children, surprised by his unusual absence of mind; on which hint, their mother raised her eyes from her work towards the handsome face of her visitor; and finding it exhibit its usual hue of health, dropped them again in silence, and quietly resumed her occupation.

As she sat there, like a statue of snow, the pang of discovering

that his father was mistaken, and that he was still alone in the world, was almost too much for Philip!—

Instead of replying to the interrogations of Selina, or attempting to account for his previous absence, he suddenly, almost ferociously, announced to Mrs. Saville, that he should not see her again for some time to come; having a round of county engagements to fulfil with Lord and Lady Askham, which would keep them away from Eden Castle till the commencement of the London season.

“Go away, and not come back again till next summer?”—cried Selina, while tears began to moisten her long eyelashes. “No, no! you *must* not go away. We shall be so unhappy without you! *Who* will come and see us when you are gone, and *who* will put us in the swing?”

“It seems a long time to look forward to next summer,” interposed her mother, as if to put an end to her prattle. “But look back to last spring, Selina, and see how quickly the time has passed!”

“Yes, because dear Mr. Askham came to see us every day, and paid us such long visits!”

“The best thing you can do, then,” said her mother, slightly colouring, “is to make the time seem short by being very good and very attentive to your lessons, and on his return, surprise him by your improvement.”

Philip’s impatience was brought to a climax by the composure of these maternal admonitions. Scarcely more than a child herself, it was absurd to hear her thus sermonizing the children!—

“You are most kind,” said he, with sarcastic bitterness, “to limit my absence to six months; I am afraid I shall afford a somewhat longer trial of Selina’s application. My brother Percy is on his return home (recalled by my father), and *his* instalment at Eden Castle will give the signal for my release. I shall immediately enter upon my diplomatic career.”

“But even then, the castle must always be your home? You will, at some future time, return to Edenbourne?”—pleaded the imperturbable Mrs. Saville.

“There is little in this neighbourhood to attract those who have freedom of choice!”—was the savage reply of Philip, who seemed to have visited Eastfield only to be ungracious. Nay, so obstinate was his moroseness, that, on finding the grief of poor Selina at the prospect of losing him increase to a degree that threatened to disarm his anger, he heartlessly disentwined her little fingers from his hand; and, pleading a commission to execute for Lady Askham, took a hasty leave, and was out of sight in a moment.

“My father was right!”—muttered Philip, in a choking voice, as he reached the green confines of the Chase.—“It was time there should be an end of this!”—

Some days after this catastrophe in the family at Eden Castle,

one of very different moment occurred in the history of the world.

England and France,—those two great countries predestined never to be one, since their union, like that of many other couples, is productive of fighting and scratching, kissing and making it up again, only to recommence their squabbles,—had hit upon fresh grounds of national dissension. On the present occasion, indeed, the new government, which asserted new claims and pretensions in behalf of *la grande nation*, adopted also modes of hostility new in the history of nations.

On the sudden proclamation of war, the English travellers in France were detained as prisoners!—

As it was then the fashion to describe the soldier of fortune who controlled its destinies, (for the *premier consul* like

Le premier roi fut un soldat heureux!)

as a species of archfiend engendered by the fiery foam of Phlegethon, the country-gentlemen instantly decided that the unfortunate *détenus* would be poisoned in cold blood, like the sick at Jaffa, or murdered in the Temple, like Captain Wright; unless reserved for a more terrible fate by some new process of scientific torture. The *Institut* might possibly offer a premium for the invention of instruments for the better excruciation of English prisoners; or Berthollet dedicate his crucibles and retorts to their readier extermination.

Now Lord Askham was a country gentleman! And who could blame him, on the present occasion, for using to the utmost his privilege of prejudice and credulity;—since his eldest son—his heir apparent—his pride—his Percy—was included among the ill-fortuned *détenus*!

On receiving the mandate of recall to England issued by his father in consequence of certain revelations made by the travelling tutor, Percy had thought proper to extend his homeward journey by a tour in the Pyrenees. Though the season of the year was unpropitious alike to the picturesque and the pastimes of Barèges, he chose to make them a pretext for prolonging his release from Eden Castle; and lo! just as he reached the city of Troubadours, the mandate of arrest went forth!—

“Why, in the name of Heaven, could he not return to England with Middlemore and Dr. Dactyl? exclaimed this distracted father, on learning the grievous intelligence;—adding (much in the tone of the “*que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?*” of Gêronte,) “and what on earth took him round by Toulouse!”—

“My brother was on his way home,” pleaded Philip. “It was his nearest way to England.”

“He had much better have come with Middlemore. He ought to have been here six weeks ago.—What could possibly take him round by Toulouse!” reiterated Lord Askham, in despair.

“When Percy wrote to you, my lord, from Barèges, he mentioned that he was to visit St. Sauveur, and said——”

“I remember, I remember!—But I desired him in my answer to lose no time on the road. I told him he was wanted at home!—What, what on earth took him round by Toulouse?”

“Would it not be better,” argued Philip, “if you ascertained immediately at Coutts’s, the safest mode of making remittances to my brother?—In his present painful situation, his resources must not be allowed to fail.”

“Certainly,—of course!—I will write directly,—or better still, will speak to Coutts himself.—Old Coutts knows more of what is going on in Europe, than they know in Downing Street or the Horse Guards; and your brother’s name can scarcely fail to be mentioned in any despatches that arrive from France. The eldest son of Lord Askham of Eden Castle, must be an object of some consequence in the eyes of this Corsican blackguard; and poor Percy would doubtless be among the first selected for persecution. Philip! my blood runs cold when I think of it!—What on earth took him round by Toulouse!”

As time passed on, and the mind of England worked itself clear upon this painful subject, not even the tenderest of parents,—not even the most hysterical of hypochondriacs,—saw cause to apprehend that one of the greatest statesmen of modern times would commit so great a blunder, or one of the greatest warriors so cowardly an act, as injure a hair of the heads of those guiltless prisoners:—and Lord Askham alone chose to persevere in painting the First Consul in the attitude of the ogre preparing his captives for table, and “smelling the blood of an Englishman.” His lordship seemed to think that the punctuality of his tax-paying, and notoriety of his antigallicism, would bring down a double measure of vengeance on his son!

Already, he lamented over him like the Duke of Ormond over his dead Ossory. Hushed were those bitter revilings which, only a few weeks before, had upbraided Percy as a prodigal—a profligate—a parricide,—bent on effecting the ruin of the house of Askham, by converting the hundreds allowed him into thousands; and, instead of fortifying his feeble lungs by a milk diet and Iceland moss, astounding Rome with his carnival antics, or, in his box at the Scala, talking down the united chorus of contrabassi and big drums!

All that Lord Middlemore had boasted of the feats of his cousin,—all that the Rev. Dr. Dactyl had entrusted to the aggrieved ear of his parents,—was now buried in oblivion. Lord Askham persisted in describing him as the comfort of his gray hairs—the hope of an honourable house—the most attached of sons—the most patriotic of John Bulls,—till he almost believed what he advanced!

“To be compelled to reside in a foreign country,” said his lordship, with a degree of mournful gravity worthy the countenance of a

mute, “to eat the bitter bread of banishment from Eden Castle,—from his beloved home,—will be death to this high-spirited young man!”

By his family misfortune, the usually taciturn lord felt that he had acquired claims to universal commiseration—a right to be listened to, a right to be read; and memorably did he abuse the privilege! As if to repay himself for half a century of insignificance, the memorials with which he beset King, Lords, Commons,—the Treasury Bench and Privy Council,—were such, both in length, breadth, and *thickness*, as must have expended in transcription the patience of any private secretary less abjectly submitted to his will, than his unfortunate son.

Though sincerely touched by an event so vital to the future interests of the captive, Philip, indeed, interpreted somewhat nearer the truth the state of Percy’s feelings, and the nature of his situation. But while admitting to himself, in secret, that certain family fetters might be almost as heavy to bear as the *parole* exacted by Napoleon, and that in Percy’s place *he* too should have gone round by Toulouse, he devoted himself to watch with redoubled interest the signs of the times, as indications of his brother’s chances of liberation.

He now took interest in those leading articles, heretofore so loathingly rehearsed; and became a nightly attendant in the gallery of the House of Commons, to examine the portents of debate. No great sacrifice!—There were giants on the earth in those nights, and gigantic cause of strife to animate their mighty energies.—Old England in its buff waistcoat, legislating for the rights of nations, had a somewhat better claim to be listened to, than Young England in its white, drivelling with boarding-school elocution over the Pharisaical dissidence of the Puseyites, or the perplexities of the Spanish succession!—

The re-rivetting of his own chains by the captivity of his brother, had perhaps some share in creating this profound sympathy. Still, Philip had discernment enough to fear that a nature like that of Percy, might degenerate during a long sojourn in France, where all his faults would pass for virtues; and that Verdun must prove a fatal school to the future lord of Eden Castle.

Trusting, however, with the many, that the enlargement of the *détenus* would be negotiated between the two governments; or rather, trusting to the eloquence of those sonorous implements of destruction (whereon Louis XIV. wisely caused to be inscribed “*Ratio ultima regum*,”—the logic of Kings,) he devoted himself anew, as in filial duty bound, to the toil and trouble of his home department. It was his business to submit without a murmur. No Canon short of the fifth commandment could inspire patience to listen to the question, a million times a day repeated, of—“But what took him round by Toulouse?”—

If the whole truth must be told, he was beginning to contemplate without much disgust, the prospect of a return to Eden Castle, whence he had departed in such dudgeon. The summer was come again. June had reappeared in the fields, with her brocaded robe of blossoms; and amid the suffocation of fashionable assemblies, and dusty monotony of Rotton Row, *who* could forbear to sigh after the cool greenery of Eden Chase, with its dotted thorns, doing penance in their white sheets, and its silvery birches bathing their drooping branch-tips in the brook?

While passing in review, as he pursued his meditative way along Pall Mall, those groupings of sylvan landscape, *some* trace perhaps of a certain cottage in Edenbourne might be remotely discernible in the distance; for though never weary of congratulating himself on having escaped the danger of falling in love with Mrs. Saville, he recurred far oftener to Eastfield and the Eastfieldians than was consonant with his professions of indifference.

Comparison with the restless, world-worn belles of a London season, had been decidedly favourable to the young widow. Her purity of complexion, her purity of nature, her softness of eye, her gentleness of speech, could not but gain by the contrast; and since her manifest indifference towards himself entitled him to cultivate her acquaintance *quoad* acquaintance, so long as it could be done without offence to his family, he was perhaps excusable in anticipating with rapture the welcome of the children and the domestic peace of her house, as the best consolations awaiting him on his return to the country. Lord and Lady Askham being just then too full of Percy and Toulouse to keep a vigilant watch on his movements, he flattered himself his way was clear.

But as the birthday drew nigh, (the glorious 4th of June, at that time as propitious to those "licensed to let posthorses," as now the Derby or the Oaks,) it appeared that he had reckoned without his host, *i. e.* his host of Eden Castle!

Lord Askham was not only too full of his son Percy to play the spy on his son Philip, but too full of him to return at present to that ancestral hall, where oxen had been roasted whole, for his birth as an heir-apparent, and his attainment of years of discretion. The tender father felt that the sight of a borough there was no Percy to represent, would be wormwood to his soul; nor could the petty sympathy of the rector and apothecary, the old tourist and his dowdy sister, content a man who had laid his sorrows at the foot of the throne, and elegiacised the ear of the administration.—

On the eve of their annual migration, therefore, when the family wagon rumbled its way to town to fetch home the properties of the house of Askham, the household was suddenly apprized that the *living* moveables were booked for another destination.

“Margaret was looking delicate; the children,” Lady Askham thought, “would be the better for the sea.”

For reasons best known to the heads of the well-disciplined family, they were to spend the autumn at Weymouth.

CHAPTER IV.

Let still the woman take
An elder than herself. So wears she to him;
So sways the level in her husband's heart.

SHAKSPEARE.

Omnes ut tecum meritis pro talibus annos
Exigat, et pulchra faciat te prole parentem.

VIRGIL.

Quand la raison a raison, c'est que le hasard y met de la méchanceté.

BALZAC.

Nothing wonderful in such a movement on the part of any family less methodical and stay-at-home than the Askhams. For English people when bored, as for dogs when rabid, a dip in the sea passes as an infallible specific; and as the popularity of the Prince of Wales was already extending itself to that frightful little fishing village on the coast of Sussex, now converted by the decree of royal caprice into a flourishing town such as in America would call itself a city,—no wonder that the loyal devotion of Lord and Lady Askham

(Heu pietas!—heu prisca fides!)

should direct *their* marine propensities towards the coast of Dorset.

His lordship might perhaps have discovered in the sequel, that a bathing-place enlivened by the presence of royalty, the galloping of dragoons, the glittering of aide-de-camps, the braying of trumpets and braying of courtiers, is a somewhat different thing from a bathing-place mourning in sackcloth and ashes, over the absence of the same; but that a second family-event was impending, calculated to reconcile him to all sublunary evils,—even to the name of Toulouse!—

Providence, which had visited him severely in his sons, was rewarding him in his daughters. Margaret Askham, the meek fellow-sufferer of the honorary secretary, was about to receive her crown of martyrdom, in the shape of a coronet: the agitation consequent on the delicate dilemmas of courtship, being in fact the origin of that paleness which had excited the uneasiness of her parents, and transported the family to the coast.

All, however, was now adjusted. Miss Askham's complexion was restored to its pristine bloom; and her alliance with the most noble the Marquis of Uppingham, had not only been announced in the papers, but elicited the congratulations of royalty.

The world, with its usual envious spirit on such occasions, wondered mightily at the match;—some people unable to conjecture how the Askhams could allow a lovely girl of nineteen to throw herself away on a man three times her age,—some, to imagine how so superior a man as Lord Uppingham could condemn himself to the society of an unformed, unmeaning miss.—For it was the great match of the season;—unique in point of settlements, diamonds, equipage, all that imparts lustre to the fleckering coruscations of Hymen's torch;—and the malcontents had an immense majority.

The truth was that, though Miss Askham, a sensible but submissive girl, had accepted the Marquis's proposals as in obedience to the commands of her parents, persons as well acquainted as her brother Philip with the dreariness of her loveless home, were tempted to surmise that reminiscences of Eden Castle imparted considerable charm to her anticipations of Uppingham Manor; while the Marquis, a man of great merit but arbitrary temper, was solely induced to offer his hand to the daughter of Lord and Lady Askham, because he wanted the best wife that could be had—for money!

Arrived at a time of life, when the gout and a winter-fireside in perspective, render domestic companionship indispensable, even to the most popular of men and ablest of ministers, he had looked about him for a patient helpmate, of his own condition in life; and if the spirit-breaking roof of Eden Castle did not produce Griseldas, what virtue in boiled mutton and backboards?

As Marino Faliero would have said in his place,—

He trusted to the blood of Lady Askham,
Pure in her veins;—he trusted to the soul
God gave her,—to the truths her Bible taught her,—
To her belief in heaven,—to her mild nature,—
To her bright faith and honour for his own!—

Attraction in a ball-room, or skill in a concert, were nothing to the purpose. For to a man of his lordship's age and predominance, such accomplishments as entrechats and bravuras appear an impertinence; and he had literally fallen in love with Margaret Askham, from the smiling serenity with which he saw her devote a whole summer's afternoon to sorting a box of entangled silks for her mother!—

On the first announcement of the engagement, her brother Philip was among those who saw in it only the disproportion of years. He could not bear that the bright youth of a girl like Margaret should pass at once into the shade; and, attributing the match to worldliness and ambition, accused the pernicious system of his parents of having dried up all natural impulses in her soul.

He even remonstrated in plain English with his sister ; and, braving the indignation of Lord and Lady Askham, in case Margaret should turn traitress and reveal his interference, adjured her to deliberate on the solemn nature of matrimonial obligations,—to forget that her *trousseau* was in the hands of Macfarlane, and the Uppingham diamonds in those of Rundell and Bridge,—and interrogate her conscience concerning her motives for swearing to *love*, as well as honour and obey, a man some years older than her father.

The prophet Balaam could scarcely have listened in greater wonderment to the reproof of the inspired quadruped, than Margaret to the rebuke of her usually uncommunicative brother. But her answer was as prompt as consoling.

“Make yourself easy, dear Philip,” said she,—after thanking him for this unexpected evidence of affection. “My choice is free,—my purposes are far other than you suppose. The kindness with which I was distinguished by Lord Uppingham from the moment of my appearance in society, (I, whom so few distinguish!) may have had some share in opening my eyes to his merits. But to me, there is more charm in the high breeding of such a man,—in his influence over the minds of others—in his command over his own,—than in the showy attractions of the ball-room partners you seem to consider more suitable as partners for life.”

Philip Askham listened in silence. “Can this be a girl of nineteen?” thought he ; “no, five-and-thirty, if she be a day!—Reason herself could not argue more frigidly. The Marquis is right ;—their ages are perfectly assorted.”

“Lord Uppingham never utters a word but brings conviction to my mind,” pursued Miss Askham, as if interpreting her brother’s thoughts ; “I never saw him out of temper, I never knew him unjust.—Are *these* no merits in the man with whom one is to pass the remainder of one’s days?”—

“*The greatest!*” replied Philip. “Still, there requires sympathy of tastes and habits, to complete the happiness of married life.”

“Between *us* there *will* be similarity of tastes and habits,” argued Miss Askham, more earnestly, “for I shall instinctively adopt his own.”

“You have at present seen so little of the world!” pleaded her brother. “Recollect, I entreat you, that should you meet hereafter some companion better suited to your years and feelings——”

“I have never yet seen the person I prefer to him,” interrupted his sister, with warmth. “Henceforward, there is no danger. I shall re-enter society with the eyes and heart of a wife.”

The axiom of a popular French moralist occurred at that moment to Philip, that “many would pass through life ignorant of the passion of love, if they had never happened to hear the name,” as fully confirmed.—Here was a girl who had never read a novel,—never

perused a line of poetry save the chaste didactics of Thomson and Cowper,—never trilled or cadenced on the fatal words “*mio bene*,”—never traced with pen or pencil the too instructive allegories of mythological lore ; and, who, pure as Eve at the fountain, surmised no charm in married life beyond the companionship of a man frosted with the snows of nearly sixty winters, and, instead of the wings of Cupid, adorned with the paraphernalia of a K. G. !

“ I see you regard me with pity !” said she, addressing her brother with a smile. “ You are wondering at my stupidity, in not preferring to a man older than my father, some gay captain in the Guards !—Thank *yourself*, dear Philip, for my enlightenment !—It was *your* example that taught me the value of a young man’s love !”

“ What can you possibly mean ?” cried Philip, apparently less skilled in the interpretation of physiognomy than his sister.—

“ For two whole months, last year,” returned Miss Askham, “ I heard nothing day after day, at Eden Castle, but complaints of your mad passion for the lady at Eastfield,—that beautiful Mrs. Saville.”

“ You have seen her, then ?”—interrupted Philip, in an altered voice.

“ Often, when driving through Edenbourne ; and constantly, at church. I never beheld a sweeter countenance, I never saw a more graceful figure : and, like the rest of the family, when I heard of your spending week after week in her company, I concluded it must end in her becoming your wife. Admit that you were desperately in love with her ?—Your absent manners,—your peevishness with *me*,—your impatience of all and everything at home,—satisfy me that, for a time, your whole heart was at Eastfield !”

“ And what then ?”—faltered Philip, equally surprised and embarrassed by the frankness of her accusations.

“ Simply that, when required by my father to renounce the object of your attachment, you became suddenly enlightened to the folly of a love match ;—and farewell, poor Mrs. Saville !”—

For an instant, Philip was half tempted to avow the *real* cause of his estrangement. But self-love prevailed. Even to his sister, a man has not courage to admit that his affection is unreturned.

“ So much,” resumed Miss Askham, in a more cheerful voice, “ so much for the stability of Love !—And when I reflect on *your* unsteadiness of purpose,—on Percy’s flightiness,—or the coarseness of our cousin Middlemore, (without an idea beyond the stable and barouche-box,) I own I congratulate myself on the prospect of passing my life with one whose affection is likely to be permanent ; and for whom my own is founded on unbounded confidence and respect.”

“ After all,” mused Philip, on parting from his sister, “ the severities of Eden Castle may have overshot the mark with Percy and myself ; but it is a capital school for wives !—I have always heard Lord Uppingham cited as one of the ablest men in the kingdom.

He has made proof of his sagacity (where the cleverest men usually shew it least) in his choice of a wife!"

And thus agreeably relieved from his scruples concerning the motives and future prospects of his sister, Philip allowed himself to fraternize *a little* more cordially with his future brother-in-law; against whom, as the most stiff-necked of Tories and Strafford-like of ministers, he entertained a certain mistrust. The wedding was to be solemnized in London. Nothing short of the metropolis would content the vast ambitions of Lord and Lady Askham, on an occasion so honourable to their family annals; and though the mature bridegroom and sensible bride pleaded for the tranquillity of Edenbourne, and the modest surplice of Doctor Hacket,—a special license, an archbishop, and the attendance of all the "thrones, majesties, dominions, pryncedoms, powers," of both their houses, were indispensable to the vain-glorious cravings of parents, who evidently accepted the marriage of their daughter as a tribute to their personal merit.

In all this, Philip could not sufficiently admire the deference testified by the Marquis towards a father-in-law, several years his inferior in age, and a thousand degrees in understanding. The urbanity with which he supported the tediousness of a family circle, dull and hollow as the lugubrious music of a muffled drum,—the patience with which he listened to Lord Askham's chapter of Lamentations over his son Percy's refusal to spend the winter at Torquay, and rebellion in going round by Toulouse,—were proofs of self-command and good-breeding which Philip admitted to be of better augury for the happiness of his wife, than the pomps of Uppingham Manor, or the promised dignities of a Lady of the Bed-chamber.

Meanwhile, the wedding, stately as it was, was still a wedding; and exercised the charm inseparable from such inspiriting events, even in the best-regulated families. The tutor and governess lapsed into secondary authorities; and Emma and Susan Askham, who were to officiate as bridesmaids, ventured to surmise, under the excitement of white satin and swans-down, wedding-cake and wedding favours, that grammars and dictionaries, solfeggi and sonatas, might not always prevail. The grave old servants relaxed into smiles, like gnarled and rusty fruit trees putting forth their white blossoms in the spring time; and even Philip felt cheered by the momentary hilarity of the house.

It was not till the Marquis and Marchioness departed after the ceremony for Uppingham Manor, amid the cheers of the populace and smiles of the most triumphant of parents, that the memory of his old grievances re-enveloped him as in a leaden winding sheet!—Alas! and woe was *him*!—He was about to become once more sole auditor of his father's Jeremiads?—In Margaret, he had lost a pitying companion; and there would be no one now to share with

him the burthen of the grand family dinners,—the stuffy dowager assemblies, and solemn oratorios, which constituted the Mansfield Street *beau idéal* of the pleasures of the season!

To his great surprise, however, Philip discovered that the entrance of a man of the world into his humdrum circle, had already enlarged its perceptions. The experience of Lord Uppingham had doubtless suggested that, during the absence of the future head of the house, *something* of the name of Askham ought to be seen in the gay circles of the *beau monde*; for the parrot-like tone in which Lord Askham repeated—“We owe it to poor Percy not to suffer our connexions wholly to decay,”—convinced him that the politic Marquis was not only the origin of the flattering invitations he received, but of the sanction which enabled him to accept them.

Lord Askham had every encouragement to slacken the chains of paternal authority in the moderate eagerness evinced by Philip “to take the goods the gods (and the Uppinghams) provided.” The young man’s spirit was broken by the sense of dependence. If, in some ball-room, the partner for whose hand he applied happened to be engaged, he instantly fancied himself scouted as a younger brother.

“She would have danced with Percy!” thought he, when his cousin Helen Middlemore pleaded fatigue as an excuse for not undertaking the *travaux forcés* of one of those country-dances of forty couples, which, at that time, rendered an invitation to a ball equivalent to a sentence of hard labour in a house of correction. For Philip had been made too painfully conscious, at Eden Castle, of the nonentityism of his position, ever to feel at ease. His habits of subjection clung to him, even in the world.

“Is Philip’s health as delicate as that of your elder brother, my dear Margaret?” inquired Lord Uppingham of his bride, after a stately family dinner in Mansfield Street, given on their return to town: and Margaret, who had gathered from her cousin, Lord Middlemore, the real state of the case as regarded Percy’s consumptive tendencies, hesitated to answer.

“Philip is not out of *health*,” said she, “only out of spirits.—My brother leads so secluded a life at Eden Castle!”

“But what business *has* he at Eden Castle? At *his* age, he should be working in some profession,”—replied the active public man.

“He was to have entered the *corps diplomatique*, I believe, but for Percy’s detention in France.”

“And is the misfortune of one brother, my dear child, to produce the ruin of the other?” inquired the Marquis, with a smile. “Strange policy, methinks!—Lord Askham’s estates being entailed, he will be able to do little for his younger children.”

“But Philip is able to do a great deal for *him*!” interrupted Lady Uppingham. “My father could not get on at all, without Philip!”

“ I could find Lord Askham three hundred better secretaries at a salary of four-score pounds a year !” observed her husband, with difficulty suppressing his disgust at the miscalculating selfishness of his father-in-law.

“ But even a private secretary could not altogether replace Philip,” pleaded Margaret. “ Our neighbourhood is a bad one ; and in the winter evenings, he is wanted for chess with my father, or backgammon with mamma.”

“ Sport to *them*, but death to *him* !” —rejoined the Marquis. “ Poor Philip !—I no longer wonder at his long face, or the compassionate tone in which you pronounce his name ! But we must see to this, my little wife.—*One* prisoner is enough in the family. Poor Philip, as you call him, must be set at liberty.”

With a deep blush, Lady Uppingham endeavoured to insinuate, as clearly as might be without attributing blame to her parents, the impossibility of change in the cast-iron arrangements of Eden Castle.

“ Slaves and despots are a reciprocal creation, my dear Margaret,” observed Lord Uppingham, in a more sententious tone. “ The feeble son is father to the arbitrary father ! Philip owes all possible duty to his parents, except such as is incompatible with self-respect.”

“ If my father and mother could only hear you preach the virtue of filial insubordination !” —said Lady Uppingham, taking his hand.

“ To their sons—only to their sons” —replied her husband, not a little amused by her air of dismay. “ In their daughters, my good little wife, I fully recognize the virtue of passive obedience. But we must lend a helping hand to poor Philip ! Though the French proverb proclaims the danger of interposing a finger betwixt the tree and the bark, I must venture mine for your brother.”

Cheered rather than dispirited by the authoritative tone of one on whose superiority of intellect she had implicit reliance, the young wife offered no further remonstrance. She trusted, perhaps, the season being at its close, that immediate occasion would not present itself for the rash attempt. Lady Askham was remaining in town only for the triumph of witnessing the first public appearance, at the birthday, of the daughter in whom her pride delighted ; after which, the family was to resume its clockwork routine at Eden Castle.

“ But why should Philip leave London before the end of the season ?” —inquired the Marquis, when these arrangements were discussed by the Askhams in his presence.—“ Leave him with *us*, my dear lord.—Though your establishment in Mansfield Street is broken up, we have plenty of room for him at Uppingham House ; and Margaret will be thankful for such an escort to the parties and operas to which I so often find it difficult to accompany her.—What

say you, Philip?—Will you give us the pleasure of your company in Privy Gardens till parliament is up?”

Accustomed to regard his children as part of his property—and an available part,—Lord Askham felt almost too much injured for words by this insult to his flag.

“Is your lordship aware,” said he, ere his son gathered courage to reply, “that I am about to preside over our County Agricultural Meeting?”

“Ay, on the 17th, I think,”—was the cool rejoinder of the Marquis, “and a full meeting I suspect you will have!—But *that* need not take Philip out of town.—*He*, I suppose, has no great genius for bone-mills and patent ploughs?”—

“I shall require my son’s assistance on the occasion!” replied Lord Askham, coldly,—for once overcoming his deference towards a son-in-law whose political position invested him with peculiar dignity in the eyes of an Irish (non-representative) peer.

“If you require his *assistance*, I have not another word to say,” said Lord Uppingham with a smile. “I forgot, my dear lord, that you would have a speech to get up, and—”

“I do not allude to assistance of *that* nature,” eagerly interrupted Lord Askham. “But during the unfortunate absence from England of my son Percy, it is right and proper that I should be supported on public occasions by the presence of his next brother.”

“At the public dinner, you mean? Certainly, certainly! At our time of life, that sort of toast-and-sentiment work is no joke. But, three weeks are wanting to the 17th; and till then, *we* will take care of him. We have some hard debating in prospect. Pitt is to speak on the Alien Bill,—a better school for your son than all the clodhopping County Meetings in the world!”—

Lord Askham opened his lips as if for rejoinder;—but feelings of some sort or other,—certainly not pleasant ones,—impeded his utterance.

“For I conclude you mean shortly to bring him into parliament!” continued the straight-forward Lord Uppingham, who, since none but the family were present, saw no need to set a watch over his lips. “Government affords us so little hope of an exchange of prisoners, that of course you will no longer reserve Edenbourne for Percy?”—

A ferocious glance from Lord Askham towards his son plainly intimated a suspicion that with *him* originated these preposterous hints! Philip felt his situation to be critical. Immediate self-vindication was indispensable. It was only by a decided negative to the friendly overtures of his brother-in-law he could hope for indulgence.

With more clearness, therefore, than might have been anticipated, he expressed his gratitude for Lord Uppingham’s kindness, and a decided objection to remaining in town.

"I fear, my dearest Margaret, my interference comes too late! —I am sadly afraid Philip has been made, and will remain, a poor creature!" — said Lord Uppingham, when subsequently talking over the matter with his wife. "He wanted courage, you saw, to back me. He had not spirit to use the arguments put into his mouth."

"Because," pleaded Margaret, whose heart yearned towards her former fellow-bondsman, "I am persuaded Philip has *really* no desire to remain in town. From words he occasionally lets fall, I fear, poor fellow, he has not half got over his attachment for Mrs. Saville!"

"The Edenbourne widow you once mentioned to me?—A woman without fortune or connexion!" cried Lord Uppingham, in horror-struck consternation.—"By Jove, *that* would be worse than all the rest!—*That* must be immediately looked to!"—

And with the promptitude of a man whom the activities of public life have rendered fertile in expedients, and who is therefore little accustomed to take things as he finds them, he began to deliberate in earnest on the prospects and capabilities of his brother-in-law. His own happiness was now too intimately linked with the welfare of the Askham family, to admit of his allowing the smallest of them to be thrown away.

While Philip Askham, therefore, accompanied his family unresistingly into the country, fortified against fate by his usual philosophy,

Durum, sed levius fit patientia
Quicquid corrigere est nefas,—

a master-hand was busy with his destinies ;—a hand rendered sufficiently puissant by long exercise of authority, to enable its *protégés* to dispense with further patience.

CHAPTER V.

Peace! I have sought it where it should be found;
And in its stead, a heaviness of heart,
A weakness of the spirit,—listless days,
And nights inexorable to sweet sleep,
Have come upon me.

BYRON.

Ἐν ἐλπίσιν χρὴ τοὺς σοφοὺς ἔχειν βίον.
EURIPIDES.

To return to Eden Castle after an absence trebling that of their ordinary residence in London—an absence during which their eldest son had been led into captivity, and their eldest daughter pro-

moted to a marquise, — was a mighty event to the Askhams. Prepared to greet the expectant neighbourhood with unwonted affability, they anticipated a considerable overflow of sympathy in return.

But alas! they had gained little by allowing Edenbourne to discover that its prosperity was unabated, though, for eighteen months, no flag had been flying at the castle! — The little borough felt somewhat aggrieved that the marriage of Miss Askham had not been solemnized in its parish church; and was secretly wounded in its feelings at being still represented in parliament by a dumby, a treasury hack, a mere warming pan for the Honourable Percy Askham; who, being a prisoner at Verdun, ought at least to be replaced by the Honourable Philip. — With an able-bodied and able-minded son at their service, Lord Askham had no right to demand their allegiance for a man of straw!

The borough knew better, however, than to grumble audibly; and no sooner had it transpired on what day the family coach would make its appearance, than orders were issued by Dr. Hacket for a rattling peal of bells as it passed through the town; — while, at the toll-bar, an attempt was made at a triumphal arch, somewhat resembling a May-day Jack-in-the-Green. — All the laurels in the town were laid under contribution: and poor Simprens' garden was shorn to the quick.

But if the whole truth must be told, Edenbourne and its environs felt not only a little sullen, but a little nervous. They scarcely knew how they should venture to look Lady Askham in the face!

"I wish my first visit to the castle was over. It will be vastly awkward!" — observed Mrs. Gwatkin to Sir Erasmus L'Estrange.

"What! to get the carriage and horses through the triumphal arch?" inquired the gallant knight, who had grown a year younger for every month's absence of the Askhams.

"Why, how is it to be explained about Mrs. Saville? — Lady Askham will think it so extraordinary, considering the suspicions entertained concerning her at Eden Castle, that we should all visit her, the moment her ladyship's back was turned!"

"After ascertaining that there was nothing in them, it was your duty, as it was *my* pleasure, to make the *amende honorable*."

"Still, I am convinced Lady Askham will take it amiss. — Out of the question, you know, for *her ladyship* to visit at Eastfield!" —

"Considering the wry faces she makes about visiting at Hexham, perhaps it *may*," — rejoined Sir Erasmus. "But she may go further and fare worse. — We have derived more gratification from Mrs. Saville's society in the last six months, than from Eden Castle in all the years of our lives." —

"I must say, however," persisted Mrs. Gwatkin, "that I wish the explanation was over; more especially as Mr. Philip has accompanied the family."

"Afraid, eh, that the fair widow will stand in poor Fanny's light?"

—Make yourself easy, my dear sister. After eighteen months butterflying in the world of fashion, depend on't a young Honourable will see little enough in either of them!—So cheer up!—I dare say your friend Lady Askham will let you off with a slight reprimand!”

Secure, meanwhile, in inordinate self-esteem against suspicion of the mingled feelings their arrival was creating, the Askhams approached Edenbourne with unabated confidence in the loyalty of their subjects.

“Poor people! our return to the castle is a *great* event to *them*!”—cried Lord Askham, with a philanthropic smile of landed-proprietorship, as the train of carriages rattled across the market-place amid the clamour of the populace, the ringing of bells, and barking of curs. “I wish Uppingham had been with us!” added his lordship, blandly addressing Philip, as they came within view of the arch of evergreens.—“I should have been glad to have *him* an eye-witness of the respect and attachment of the neighbourhood!”

At that moment, Philip Askham's eyes were peering so admiringly from the carriage window, that his father was justified in concluding them to be fixed on the calico flags, adorned with appropriate devices, streaming from the summit of the arch; and if Philip allowed them to stray a *little* beyond that loyal trophy, so as to catch a glimpse of the shrubbery-belt enclosing the lawn of Eastfield, the more shame to his duplicity! At all events, he vouchsafed no answer to the paternal vaunt; probably because lost in delightful anticipations of the moment when, escaping from the pomp and prosifications of home, he should make his way once more to the hermitage of the young recluse; entertaining as little doubt of finding her the pensive mourner he had left behind, as his father and mother of the unaltered devotion of their country neighbours!—

Never had Eden Castle worn so pleasant an aspect to his eyes, as on that day;—not because the school-children were planted on the lawn, like a little shrubbery of charity plants, to chant a doleful stave of welcome to their noble patrons;—not because the old people at the almshouse doors curtsied or uncovered their shaking heads to their benefactors;—not because the bronzed face of the out-door servants, shone “celestial rosy red” with a double allowance of home-brewed. But in the confusion of the moment, the house was unhinged. Chaos was come again. The school-books were not unpacked, and the tutor and governess wandered up and down, like our first parents after the fall, forlorn and purposeless. The children might actually be heard laughing aloud, as they ran through the shrubberies towards their little play-gardens, so long sighed for **among** the sooty bushes of Cavendish Square.

A shudder came over him, however, when he reflected that,

though the days were at their longest, they did not last for ever; and that a morrow was at hand when Order, which, according to Pope, is "Heaven's first law," would also legislate once more at Eden Castle. The approaching Agricultural Meeting, too, was in store for him with its elocutionary labours.—Lord Askham who, since compelled to fight hand to hand with government on the question of his son's exchange, had peeled off his habits of reserve, would doubtless follow up his new vocation by wreaking on an unoffending county, the eloquence bottled up, like the old October, ever since the day of addressing his assembled tenantry in honour of the birth of his son and heir; and for such a speech, his lordship must be crammed, like one of his prize-oxen. Philip foresaw reams of rough draughts, perplexed by emendations upon emendations, likely to pass through his hands.

On this point, however, he was mistaken. Suspicions of an understanding between his son and son-in-law, had insinuated themselves into Lord Askham's mind; and so tenacious was he of his consequence in the eyes of the noble President of the Council, that he would not for the world have allowed a *t* to be crossed, or an *i* to be dotted, by his scribe of all work, in the discourse which his mind's eye already beheld in the columns of the County Chronicle, duly despatched per mail for the edification of Uppingham Manor.

In order, indeed, to mark to the neighbourhood that he required no assistance at the hands of his son, he enfranchised Philip for a time, by pointedly excluding him from his agricultural survey of the Eden Castle estate; in all quarters of which, after so long an absence, a complication of rural interests claimed his attention.

What, therefore, more easy than for Philip to escape from the portals which stood thus invitingly open?—Common civility required him to make inquiries after the health of his country neighbours; and nearest of them all, as well as dearest, abided Mrs. Saville!—Already, as he took his way along the Chase, his fancy depicted that snug, cozy little drawing-room, shaded by the curtains so opprobriated by Mrs. Gwatkin;—where the fondest of mothers devoted herself to the happiness of the fairest of children; where no music was heard but their prattle, the kettle singing on the fire, or the cat purring on the hearth,—where no finer engravings were seen than the cuts in little Edward's Robinson Crusoe,—where periodicals reached not and reviews were unknown; yet where, in Philip Askham's opinion, there prevailed a charm of elegance and refinement beyond reach of the luxuries of Eden Castle or grandiosities of Uppingham Manor.

He was almost angry with himself, however, for the excess of emotion that caused his life-blood to ebb and flow, as he placed his hand once more on the well-known garden latch;—and though there was none but himself to be deceived by the assertion, he insinuated that it must be the intense fragrance of the flower beds on

the lawn, which rendered him so heartsick. Eden Castle had not accustomed him to flowers; and the favoured nook of earth sheltered among the limestone cliffs, was variegated as by the blossoms of Paradise.

Another moment, and the bold comparison was doubly justified. Scarcely had Philip Askham replied to the gentle greeting of Mrs. Saville, and the half-shy half-friendly recognition of the children, when he perceived Sir Erasmus L'Estrange, in his well-remembered nankeen gaiters, seated with smiling and familiar self-complacency in his accustomed chair.—The old serpent had made its way into the garden of Eden!—

Philip's heart sank within him. He saw that his pleasant mornings of yore,—his harmless happy *tête-à-tête* of daily occurrence,—were never more to be renewed. All comfort in Eastfield was at an end.

Another fatal fact was equally incontestible,—that never had its fair proprietress looked so lovely! Her weeds were laid aside,—her wavy hair was, for the first time, fully uncovered; and amended health and spirits had perfected into womanhood the development of her girlish beauty. Philip was positively dazzled as he raised his eyes to a face, pure as one of the brightest creations of Giorgione. It was only a certain chaste sobriety of dress, (without being actually mourning, the nearest possible approach to it,) which satisfied him that her nature was unchanged; and that, though domesticated under her roof, the withered Sinbad before him was not about to convert those matronly robes into bridal attire.

It was irritating enough, however, to find himself accosted by both, in the self-same friendly tone. They seemed actuated by a common feeling of courtesy; and *any* feeling in common between a lovely young woman of two-and-twenty and a rich and grim old bachelor of sixty-four, *must* be offensive. Though in the case of the Uppinghams, Philip had been readily reconciled to the same disparity, on the present occasion, his bosom heaved with disgust!

It is true that little Edward Saville did his utmost to increase his abhorrence. To children, eighteen months constitute an eternity; and in reply to Philip's questions about their former pursuits,—the swing, the terrier, the fishing-tackle,—he heard of nothing but “Sir Erasmus!”

“Sir Erasmus puts us in the swing every morning,” lisped the little fellow; “and Skye is gone to live at his house; because there is a stable-yard, you know, at the Lodge; and terriers are only fit, mamma says, for a stable-yard.—As soon as I am able to ride, Sir Erasmus is going to get a Shetland pony for me,” added the child, warming in praise of his friend.—“Mamma took away the little fishing-rod *you* gave me, because when I went out with it alone, I nearly fell into the river.”

Philip lent but a divided attention to the child's long explana-

tions; as a punishment for which, he had further to learn that this untoward accident was the origin of the acquaintance between Eastfield and Edenbourne Lodge. As extremes meet, the venerable naturalist of sixty-four, while groping in the water-meadows after specimens for his herbary, had come to the aid of the little naturalist of four, minus the sixty; and the terrified mother, thankful that such a Triton should have been at hand among the minnows by which her darling had been betrayed into danger, could no longer close her gates.

Presented by her new acquaintance to his sister's family, the barrier which divided Mrs. Saville from the neighbourhood was soon overthrown;—the Gwatkins, defrauded just then of the social succours of Eden Castle, being so cordial in their overtures, that Timon himself could not have resisted their advances.

Philip Askham could scarcely blame her. The whole thing was the result of accident: and at *her* age, why condemn herself to perpetual isolation? The faithful devotion which had blinded her to the strength of his attachment, did not render it a crime to dine occasionally at Hexham Hall, or drink tea at Edenbourne Rectory,—though the loss occasioned to *him* by such a change, was indeed irreparable!

It was perhaps because reflections of this nature imparted a saddened expression to his countenance, that Mrs. Saville's little girl,—who, throughout his prolonged absence, had adhered to her declarations that “Sir Erasmus, however kind, could never replace their own dear Philip, who had lent them his cloak on their cold journey to Edenbourne,”—drew closer towards his knee; and, during the interrogations of her brother, placed her little hand affectionately within his own.

“We missed you so much when you went away!”—whispered Selina, when her mother's attention was engrossed by the elder visitor. “We used to talk of you every day. But mamma told us you would never come back, and that you had quite forgotten Eastfield!”

Soothed by the endearing tone in which these simple words were uttered, Philip replied by imprinting a silent kiss on Selina's ivory forehead; attempting to conceal his emotions by smoothing down her auburn curls.

“But now you are come back again,” resumed the child, encouraged by his notice, “you will come and see us every day again, won't you?—and put us into the swing as you used, instead of Sir Erasmus?”—

Apprehensive that the revelations of Selina might become of a too personal nature, Mrs. Saville attempted to make the conversation general. Unluckily, she also made it disagreeable. Her adoption of the first person plural was not to be borne!—

“We have not yet congratulated you,” said she, “on the happy

event in your family. Yet believe me we did full honour at Eden-bourne to Miss Askham's marriage. The bonfires on Eden Down must have been visible half across the county!"

"I never remember to have seen a finer blaze," added Sir Erasmus, (looking, in his nankin gaiters and camlet suit as dry and yellow as a Zweiback biscuit,) "except on occasion of a Suttee which I had the good fortune to witness, of a Malabar Begum in the neighbourhood of Trincomalee."

"A somewhat inauspicious comparison, sir, for wedding rejoicings!" retorted Philip, angrily. "But perhaps you are of my opinion, that a match where the bridegroom has forty years the advantage of the bride, is little better than a funeral pile?"—

"Pardon me,—I see nothing of the kind in it!" replied the prim old gentleman. "There are many worse disparities in married life than difference of age; and Heaven knows poor Miss Askham had little chance, hereabouts, of a more suitable alliance. As my sister Gwatkin often observes, there is not a young man worth speaking of in this part of the county!"—

"You perceive, Mr. Askham, that your long absence has caused *your* name to be excluded from our list," said Mrs. Saville, in a conciliatory tone, as if shocked by the mutual ungraciousness of her visitors.

"I have indeed become a stranger here," was the bitter retort of Philip; and though, during the remainder of the visit, his gentle hostess devoted herself to the task of soothing his evidently ruffled spirit, and though woman, like the viper, possesses in her own nature, an antidote for every wound of her infliction, on the present occasion the venom had spread too widely. Philip Askham eventually took his departure from the cottage, writhing under as absurd a sense of ill-usage, as though the fair Evelyn had violated an engagement to preserve their acquaintanceship immaculate as the vows of affianced love!

On his way homeward through Eden Chase, he gave vent to his long-repressed irritation of feeling.

"She is quite right to despise me!" cried he. "How can I wonder that even yonder withered old mummy should be more important in her eyes than myself;—a poor, beggarly, helpless wretch of a younger brother,—of no more account, even in my own family, than one of the upper servants!—*Any* woman of sense and feeling would spurn the fool who submitted to such subjection. How much more, one who has been happy in the affection of a man of spirit, like Saville! In becoming better acquainted with the neighbourhood, she has learned to estimate my position. Nothing can be more marked than her change of manner. Even the children—even that darling little Selina,—seemed to view me as an object of commiseration! But I cannot stand this much longer! If my father *must* have a hanger-on among his sons, Henry is on the eve

of leaving Cambridge:—let him victimize Henry! Lord Uppingham, an impartial judge, understood my situation at a glance. *Strenua nos exercet inertia*. I am losing my faculties,—I am becoming weary of my life! As soon as this confounded Agricultural Meeting leaves my father at leisure, I will compel him to an explanation!”

His lordship was certainly in no mood, just then, to give ear to filial remonstrances! As in the case of all absentees, abuses had crept during his absence into the administration of his affairs. His farms had been neglected,—his preserves injured,—his park trespassed upon,—his woodlands exposed to depredation. For in an establishment so methodical, the smallest relaxation of discipline becomes fatal.

All, therefore, was confusion in what was by courtesy called his mind. Wrongs to be redressed, tenants to be ejected, bailliffs to be discharged, were intermingled *sens dessus dessous* with the elements of his wonderful speech:—drill husbandry, the pacification of Europe, the repeal of the malt tax, fiorine grass, and the barbarous infringement of the rights of nations in the person of the Honourable Percy Askham!—Every blotting-book in the house contained scraps and shreds of eloquence, of no good omen to the ears of the Agricultural Meeting; and such a world of mysterious meanings was hieroglyphicized in his usually blank physiognomy, that any one meeting his lordship, without warning, in the lobbies or shrubberies of Eden Castle, might have supposed him intent on the perpetration of some heinous crime.

What, therefore, was the astonishment of Philip, on his return home after his disappointment at Eastfield, to behold his father suddenly advance towards him, with a radiant visage and outstretched hand, overflowing with milk and honey!

“I congratulate you, Philip!” said he; “I sincerely congratulate you. Your prospects in life (which for years have been a subject of the most serious concern to your mother and myself) are satisfactorily adjusted. In consideration of my well-known attachment to the throne and staunch support of government, and perhaps in some measure on account of the impossibility of meeting my wishes with respect to the enlargement of your brother, his Majesty hath been pleased to appoint you to a post in the Audit Office, to which the education you are known to have received, and the duties you have fulfilled in this house, satisfy him you will do ample justice.”

“An appointment in the Audit Office?—said Philip, breathless with delight.

“With a salary of eight hundred a year!” said Lord Askham, with emphasis: “a place that might have literally been offered to your eldest brother—”

Overcome with gratitude and joy, Philip began to reproach him-

self with his former injustice towards his father. While accusing Lord Askham of selfishness and oppression, that misjudged parent had been not only exercising his influence to obtain him a government appointment, but endeavouring to qualify him for the discharge of its duties.

"You must hasten instantly to town," resumed his lordship! "Next week parliament will be up, and the ministry dispersed. Not a moment is to be lost. It will doubtless be a disappointment to you, Philip, to forego the Agricultural Meeting; but your interests in life are at stake, and *I* will take care that a county paper, containing an accurate report of the proceedings, shall reach you in London. You may even, if you think proper, transmit it to the editor of some daily paper. They are glad, at this time of year, to secure authentic provincial intelligence."

Philip could scarcely believe his senses. His father, putting a case to him in the optative, or in any other than the imperative mood! His father, desiring him to do as "he thought proper," in even so trifling a matter as the reprinting of his speech!—

"I shall find Margaret and Lord Uppingham still in town," said he, after respectful expressions of gratitude, both for the appointment procured, and county paper promised. "How pleased and surprised they will be to learn what you have done for me!"

"Yes,—your sister seems vastly pleased. The letter announcing your appointment came from Margaret," observed Lord Askham, his brow suddenly contracting. "For of course you must be aware, Philip, that though the place is given in consideration of the family claims I have specified, the application for it to government came from the Marquis of Uppingham."

"I might have guessed it!" was Philip's mental rejoinder. "How could I for a moment suppose that my emancipation proceeded from my father!"—

It was an additional satisfaction, however, in leaving home, that his joy was undisturbed by compunctious visitings.—He had nothing and no one to regret there,—absolutely no one and nothing!—

The woman to whom he had madly dreamed of devoting himself, had opened his eyes to the slightness of her friendship. In his own family, he was an unconsidered younger son; and, on reaching the corner of the London road excluding Eden Castle from sight, he exclaimed in bitterness of soul, as Percy had done five years before in joyousness of spirit,— "Farewell, thou dreary pile!—heaven knows when we shall meet again!"

CHAPTER VI.

Men, like butterflies,
Show not their meally wings but to the summer.

SHAKSPEARE.

Τῶν ἐιτοχέντων κάνοες εἶσι οὐγτενέις.

EURIPIDES.

Such were the antecedents of a young placeman, who, in the year 1805, assumed with general approbation the envied privileges of “a man of wit and pleasure about town.”

Touched by the Promethean torch of independence, Philip Askham started forth a new creature. No longer the dispirited denizen of a dull house in Mansfield Street,—no longer compelled to render a daily account to his task-masters of the use of his five senses,—the enfranchised bachelor of St. James’s Place trod the earth with a firmer step, and encountered the eyes of his fellow-creatures with an uplifted countenance. Good-humour produced good looks: and now that he was his own master, every body was his most obedient humble servant. Friends, nay, relations, rose up like myrmidons from the earth, to welcome him into his new world.

“By Jove, Phil! Percy won’t know you when he sees you again!”—vociferated his coaching cousin, Lord Middlemore, a disciple of the Lade school, then in the zenith of its flagrancy. “Percy used to swear that you would be flannel-petticoated for life at Eden Castle. But gad! now you’ve thrown over the old folks, you’re throwing off in style.—Wish you joy, my boy, of having cut your wisdom teeth!”—

Lord Middlemore’s sister, too, his handsome cousin Helen, whose near-sightedness had often disabled her for discerning an obscure younger brother across the Hanover Square Rooms, at the Ancient Music, when in moping attendance on his family, was *now* lynx-eyed in her recognition. One of her mother’s opera-tickets was placed at Philip’s disposal; and to her ladyship’s table in Brook Street, he had a general invitation.

“It would have been an idle compliment, my dear nephew,” said the dowager, “so long as you resided with your family. But an official man, always on the pavé, gets sadly tired of dining every day at his club, before the regular dinner-parties of the season commence.”

Such a pretext for occasionally escaping in former times, the La Trappish dinners in Mansfield Street, might, however, have been more acceptable than the loss of one of the pleasant house-dinners

at White's, the merits of which were *caviar* to Lady Middlemore. But even towards her meanness, even towards the worldliness of the Lady Helen, he was indulgent. The King of France forgave the injuries perpetrated against the Duke of Orleans; and the new official whom Lord Uppingham's patronage had snatched into a seventh heaven from the Slough of Despond, was in charity with all mankind.

Nothing perfect, however, in this world of imperfection! Better for Philip had his promotion occurred earlier in the parliamentary session, so as to secure him the counsel of one so much a master of the arts of life, as his brother-in-law, the Marquis. For notwithstanding Lord Uppingham's aptitude in giving advice, all he had been able to effect in Philip's favour previous to his departure for the north, was to present him to the heads of his department, and propose him at the best club; and ere they met again the following winter, Philip was likely to be as fixed in his habits of life, as though his liberty were of six years', instead of six months', enjoyment.

In those hard-fighting times, the great vessel of the state was always in commission. No holiday—no intermission!—If the Red Book and the country were encumbered with sinecure places to the amount of hundreds of thousands, the places which were *no* sinecure admitted of little trifling. Those who *did* work, worked hard enough for the rest; and an autumn in town was consequently a less dreary affair than in these piping times of peace, when most of the public offices prorogue themselves simultaneously with the prorogation of parliament. But even had the town been thinner, and its fogs thicker, gay and sociable would it have appeared to Philip Askham, by comparison with the moral opacities of Eden Castle.

One only charge was given him at parting by Lord Uppingham. "Lose no opportunity," said he, "of manifesting your intention to take a decided line in politics. It will not commit you, for your place (luckily for *you*) is permanent; and in these times, a novice in public life must be a party-man, or nothing! Your father, however, seems to hark back about bringing you into parliament; hinting, in his last letter, that since I have taken your fortunes in hand, it may be as well to reserve Edenbourne for Henry; who having obtained honours at Cambridge, seems the predestined man of genius of the family."

Philip was just then too much in sorts with fortune to quarrel with any one; or on this hint, his younger brother might have succeeded to the jealous grudge formerly entertained against Percy.—He rejoiced, however, that his exclusion from parliament suspended the necessity for those precipitate political manifestations suggested by his party-ridden brother-in-law.—For, regarding things in general with different eyes from both patron and parent, he did not care to

add political antagonism to their many causes of mutual discontent.

As it was, the only method for an ex-parliamentary man to avouch his politics, was by the depth and strength of his potations, and the toasts that served to season them. Pamphlets were not in fashion, as speaking-trumpets for sucking politicians;—Wilkes and Junius having established so alcoholic a standard of party writing, that anything short of treason or sedition, passed for milk-and-water. Port and claret formed a pleasanter alternative : and all that Philip permitted himself, in compliance with the “invariable principles” of his family and usages of that convivial epoch, was to drink occasionally to the health of William Pitt; which William Pitt’s *more* than occasional drinking, had, sooth to say, somewhat impaired.

Nor was pretext for wassail deficient. The glorious victory of Trafalgar had set all the patriotic pulses of England throbbing; and even for the alarmists of the day, a terrible arch of promise was created by the shining of the sun of Hope through its gory shower. People like Lord Askham, who hailed the metamorphosis of the “Corsican blackguard” into an emperor recognized by the powers of Europe, as a personal affront,—“the fiend’s arch mock” expressly devised for their mortification,—scarcely knew how to keep their exultation within the bounds of decency on that memorable occasion. If the French had the best of it by land, the sea (God bless her!) was true to her allegiance; and scarcely had the blood-seeking Tories grace to turn aside and weep for Nelson, so exorbitant was their joy in this new naval triumph of the hereditary Ruler of the waves!

It was, perhaps, because accustomed from his boyhood to behold the battles of the war-party fought o’er again at his father’s table by partizans resembling those Chinese warriors in calico petticoats and wooden shoes, whose utmost heroism is visible to the bystanders, that the sympathies of Philip were waywardly enlisted under the opposite banner. *Who* could believe in the infallibility of such a pope as Lord Askham! *Who* accept the faith of such a college of cardinals as his pottering uncles! And now that his liberal tendencies had space to expand in the rarefied atmosphere of a more intelligent society,—now that he found wit and beauty (at five-and-twenty a sufficient substitute for wisdom,) engaged on his favourite side, it was somewhat difficult to bear in mind that he was indebted for his present happiness to a man who voted with the Tories!

By degrees, his cheers for the pilot who was weathering the storm, and conveying into harbour only a shattered hulk, subsided into silence; till at length, the silence was involuntarily broken by cheers for his great antagonist. The Marquis had insisted on his taking a decided line in politics; and there was nothing in their relative position by which Philip felt deprived of his full liberty of conscience in deciding *which* line it should be.

Among his colleagues in his new office, was an old Eton chum, the son of a man of some influence in the Whig party ; by the grace of whose hospitalities he enjoyed a capital opportunity of studying in the inner sanctuary of private life, some of the greatest illustrations of an illustrious epoch ;—and Philip, the slender structure of whose Toryism had crumbled into dust, in the senate, before the eloquence of Fox,—

Lampo nel fiammeggiar,—nel romor tuono,—
Fulmini nel ferir,—

found his proselytism completed, in society, by the sallies of the fascinating Sheridan. Like a visitor to the Gobelins' manufactory, he was equally charmed by the imposing beauty of the tapestry, and the ingenuity displayed in its reverse.

His new friend took especial delight in confirming the conversion of the political novice. His father, Sir James Hardyng, who had occupied a high legal post under the Whigs, now occupied nothing but a charming villa at Wandsworth, one of the favourite resorts of the liberals of the day. Unembarrassed by the dignified responsibilities of Chiswick or Dropmore, Eske Hill presented in its highly flavoured *macédoine* of wits and politicians, one of those brilliant banquets where prussic acid is imbibed under the name of noyeau ;—a *bureau d'esprit*, where the gravest interests of life are disposed of by a pun or an epigram. As the pyrotechnists pretend to exhibit in fireworks the Fate of Orpheus and Eurydice, or the Siege of Troy, the feats and the defeats of the administration were commemorated in the political arsenal of Eske Hill, by a series of squibs and crackers.

The flashy brilliancy of such a coterie was the very thing to subjugate a mind blinking out of the muzzy atmosphere of Eden Castle!—The keen unsparing wit which, like a highly-tempered blade, cut to the bone ere the victim felt himself wounded, imposed conviction on his startled senses ; and like a lark, he was taken in a springe baited with glitter. Even with older heads than Philip Askham, however, the best table, the best wines, and the best small talk, are apt to pass for the best side of the argument.

The literature of the country was just then at a discount. Prophets had appeared, indeed, but they prophesied in the wilderness. Those great writers, whose names are now inscribed on corner-stones of the temple of fame,—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey,—were damned by an epithet ; while Moore, like a frisky lord in a police office, was fain to shelter his irregularities under an assumed name. The uproar of war's alarms had somewhat deafened the ear of the public to the music of Apollo's flute !—

The fashionable world, accordingly, restricted its literary enjoyments to laughing at the waggeries of the Anti-Jacobin, or shrieking at the diabolisms of Monk Lewis ;—dim foreshowings of the

Romantic school, on the eve of its creation by Scott, — or gurglings of the vitriolic Hippocrene about to start from the earth on the stamping of the Pegasus of Byron. The belles lettres, which, for two centuries past, have received their impulsion from France, had undergone a staggering blow at the revolution, under the effects of which they still languished; and, behold, as in the case of other extenuated patients, hysteria supervened.

Of such a state of things, irony is the natural offspring, — the false spirits arising from a disorganized constitution. “*A chaque époque donnée,*” says Hegel, “*il y a toujours correspondance parfaite entre l’état du monde à cette époque, et la philosophie qui en est la conscience et la pensée;*” — and as in France, melodrama with her matted locks and reeking poniard had sprung out of the excesses of the revolution, (like one of the crime-engendered monsters described by Ariosto,) in England, the Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews were attempting to banter into a sense of its deficiencies, that sullen public which refused to listen to the charming of a wiser charmer.

The pleasant society collected round Sir James Hardyng, whose notions had been rendered somewhat more elastic than those of his neighbours by a winter passed in Paris in the Consular court, was on the whole a favourable specimen of the new school. At Eske Hill, Philip Askham perceived, for the first time, the enhancement conferred on convivial pleasures by “*flashes of merriment*” kindled by the sparkle of wit. — The erudition of the Hardyng set was luckily not beyond the digestive powers weakened at Eden Castle by a prolonged diet of pap; and he accordingly suffered himself to be led captive by the brilliant Brinsley and his associates, — a coterie just then let loose upon society by the pecuniary and domestic embarrassments of the Prince of Wales. The resplendent constellation of Carlton House being broken up, its component parts were scattered, like falling stars, to become the luminaries of a lower sphere.

To the recluse of Edenbourne, their lustre might have been almost oppressive, but that its intensity was modified by the presence of Lady Hardyng; a mild pleasing woman devoid of offence or pretence, whose feminine pursuits and friendships introduced a softer medium into the conversation, and prevented the great wits from clashing, — like the bran or sawdust used in packing hardware. Bob Hardyng, the only son and spoiled child of the house, — a wild enthusiast for the fine arts, — profited by his influence over his mother, and the lessons he had imbibed in Paris, to complete her circle of guests by the most distinguished painters, musicians, and actors of the time; and, as on collar days at court every knight appears in his badge of chivalry, every man of them assumed his laurel, and every muse struck her golden lyre, to diversify the enjoyments of hospitable Eske Hill.

Philip Askham was content to adopt, without much scrutiny, the dogmas so pleasantly expounded under its roof. As on the stillest mill-pond, the reflection of circumjacent objects becomes vivid as reality, the torpor to which his mind had been reduced at home, rendered it peculiarly susceptible of new impressions.

The only drawback on his comfort, was the prospect of his family's return to town. Though resolved to make a sturdy stand against molestation, he foresaw a disagreeable struggle. But his fears were premature. Other objects engaged their attention. The approaching confinement of the Marchioness of Uppingham, and impending presentation at court of her second daughter, absorbed the meagre sympathies of Lady Askham; while those of his lordship were distracted between the increasing extravagance of his eldest son, and the rebellion of one of the younger ones; who, Trafalgar-bitten at ten years old, had tormented even his tutor into admitting that he was fit for nothing but the navy!

Lord Askham, however, was ingenious enough to invent a new species of torture for his *échappé des bagnes*.—Like Nero, he chose to convert his freedman into a friend! Instead of pretending to renew his tyrannies over Philip, he sought to make him the confederate of his tyranny over others; and so far from rebuking the luxuriousness of the bachelor den in St. James's Place, had nothing to complain of but the profligacy of Percy, and refractoriness of Claude. Philip, with his hands full of government business, and pockets full of government money, had become an object of respect!

If anything could have more amazed him than this unnatural deference, it was Lord Askham's manifesto of the present state of things at Edenbourne.

"We have had an unusually gay autumn," said he. "The flattering manner in which I was supported by the neighbourhood, indeed, I may say, by the whole county, at the Agricultural Meeting, rendered it indispensable to offer some civility in return."

Philip, finding himself appealed to, replied by an assenting bow.

"A ball is the most comprehensive compliment on such occasions," resumed his lordship, in an argumentative tone: "and on a ball I decided. Your sister Emma, who (though not presented) made her first appearance on the occasion, was the belle of the evening;—though some people by-the-bye, Philip, assigned the palm to Mrs. Saville."

"To Mrs. Saville?" faltered Philip, unable to conceal his surprise at hearing *viva voce* from his father, a name which, even in the depths of his heart, he seldom permitted himself to pronounce.

"We have seen a good deal of her lately," resumed his lordship, as unconcerned as if talking of Simprens or Sir Erasmus L'Estrange. "A very deserving young woman, I find.—You should have explained to us, Philip, when I objected to the acquaintance,

that her husband was the son of Sir Herbert Saville of Bayhurst, and she herself, one of the Monsons of Kent. Her social position was completely misunderstood at Edenbourne."

"Of Mrs. Saville's social position, my lord, I know nothing—of herself very little," retorted Philip, with some bitterness: convinced that nothing but certainty of the young widow's indifference towards himself, would have obtained indulgence for her from his father.

"We met her at dinner at Hexham, and Emma persuaded me to invite her to the ball," added Lord Askham, in explanation.

"When *I* had the honour of her acquaintance," observed Philip, with growing indignation, "she professed a determination to live in complete retirement."

"The very circumstance that rendered her an object of suspicion!"—cried his father. "However, she was wise enough to perceive her error; and if accidentally compelled to submit to the visits of the Gwatkins, and that grotesque old man at Edenbourne Lodge, the honour of admittance to the circle at Eden Castle has afforded some compensation."

Philip dared not give vent to his feelings in reply. But in the depths of his heart, he murmured a quotation, more classical than kind, touching the mutability of the sex,—paraphrased in the venomous Richard of Gloucester's apostrophe to the inconsistency of "shallow changing woman!"

But while Lord Askham's dispositions towards him underwent this miraculous mollification, those of his brother-in-law were beginning to wax somewhat hard. Conscious of having transgressed against Lord Uppingham's intentions, and schooled by the former oppressions of Eden Castle to assist all indication of undue authority,—Philip resolved to place himself on his guard against the reprehensions of the Marquis, by the assumption of a dignified reserve.—It was not difficult!—For twenty years had he lived with a model of such accomplishments before his eyes,—it was only, however, to his idolized wife, Lord Uppingham allowed himself to express his dissatisfaction.

"I cannot exactly make out Philip," said he to the Marchioness,—as they were enjoying together an airing in the King's Road, one sunshiny December day. "He has lost that subdued manner I thought so pleasing.—He has been living lately, I find, with an equivocal set of people."

"*Equivocal?*"—repeated Lady Uppingham, who had noticed in her brother only a favourable change in health and spirits.

"I scarcely know how to describe them,—half castes, as regards society,—in political life, adventurers;—authors, artists, actors,—the scum of the effervescence of Carlton House!"—replied the Marquis, between whose solid nobility and the wind, an *olla podrida* like that of Eske Hill had never a chance of interposing.

"My aunt Middlemore and Helen were telling me last night, in

Mansfield Street, that he was quite the rage," observed Lady Uppingham.

"The *rage!*" reiterated the Marquis, shrugging his shoulders; "the very phrase for a flashy girl like Helen, as indicating the madness prevalent 'when the dog star rages.' But rage or not, I fear poor Philip is deficient in the self-possession and steadiness of purpose indispensable to all success in life."

"*Your* steadiness of purpose, my dear husband, has bespoken his success!" replied Lady Uppingham, feelingly.—"Thanks to *you*, Philip's fortune is made.—What can he want more than your kindness has procured?"

"A position of his own creation.—if he have the spirit of a mouse!" cried her lord. "The superstructure of our fortunes, Margaret, should be in proportion to the foundation afforded us.—Beginning life as Philip has begun it, he might work his way to eminence."

"And you think him too indolent for the attempt?"

"I think his way already missed! He has flung himself, without rhyme or reason, out of our sphere; or rather, in running after rhyme, has lost sight of reason!—Philip hovers like a bat, between the two parties; and like other amphibious animals, creates enemies in either element.—By the Tories, his connexions will cause him to be mistrusted; by the Whigs, his conduct. But don't look so much alarmed, dearest Margaret,"—added he, on seeing her change colour,—"*I* make the most of his delinquencies, that you may use your influence with your brother, (and *your* influence, who could withstand!) to induce him to assume a more explicit position."

"He is probably enjoying the passing hour, without regard to the future or the past," observed Lady Uppingham, in a gentle tone of deprecation.

"The very thing I complain of!—That airy nothing called the present, is the subtle essence of human existence,—the thing that creates our reputation, and decides our fortunes.—The frescoes of some grand Italian cupola, viewed face to face, present a confusion of blurs and blotches; yet at a distance, resolve themselves into a majestic design. So should the daily trivialities of life be studiously adjusted;—whereas such desultory habits as Philip's, remain unmeaning blotches, contemplated from whatever point of view."

"I will speak to him.—Let us hear what he has to say for himself!" said Lady Uppingham.—"Like other creatures tamed by long confinement, he may have been puzzled, on emerging from his cage, to determine what road to take."

She *did* accordingly speak to Philip. But he who answered her, was no longer the humbled Philip of Eden Castle! The bird had lost its natural notes, and could at present repeat only imperfect

snatches of airs learned from its bird-organ. Like the bewildered Sacristan in the Monastery after his interview with the White Lady, he replied to his sister's admonitions by incoherent echoes of the incantations of Eske Hill!

"O ye Edenbournians!"—said he, "how hard do I labour to obtain your applause!—And that it should be labour lost after all!—A year ago, Margaret, I was abused among you for my apathy;—pointed at as a hypochondriac,—scouted as a sneak.—Now, because I have profited by my independence—to form friendships and opinions of my own, you hint that I shall come to the gallows!"—

"I have hinted nothing of the kind, my dear brother, that I am aware of," replied Lady Uppingham, confused by his tone of levity. "I only entreat you to remember the fate of Percy! See to what a destiny *his* flightiness has betrayed him!"

"And what better, pray, could your ladyship expect of your brothers?"—said Philip, rising to settle his cravat in the glass, with an affectation of affectation. "We do but follow the example of our excellent parents. 'As crows the old cock, so crows the young;' and Lord Askham is, without exception, the most inconsistent man of my acquaintance.—Like the Hottentots, he carves unto himself idols of wood; and when the skies don't rain to his liking, chastises his divinities by trailing them in the dust.—If you could only hear him talk of Percy!"

"I am afraid my brother's conduct is such as to cause him some uneasiness," said Margaret, gravely.

"Had Percy's home been made pleasanter to him, he would not have gone round by Toulouse!"—retorted Philip: "As it is, his debts and Catholic widow, will have to be brought before the House of Commons, one of these days, like those of other heirs-apparent!—But considering all my father used to say of my incapacity, I see no reason why he should take up hours a day of my time, (which is the public's,) in consultations about his family affairs; ay, and without booking up his six and eight-pence per item for my excellent advice!"—

"He concludes, probably, that in your present responsible situation, you have acquired habits of business," observed Lady Uppingham. "What inconsistency in that?"

"Know then this truth, my dear Margaret, (enough for man, or woman, to know,)" said Philip, attempting to conceal his embarrassment by taking admiringly from her hands the tiny cap she was embroidering;—"after forcing me to break off my intimacy with—with—the lady at Eastfield,—of whom last year you spoke so kindly,—my father has actually invited her to Eden Castle, and taken her to his heart of hearts!"—

"I heard from Emma they found in Mrs. Saville a charming acquaintance.—But is *such* your ground of complaint against my

father? and can you really treat so lightly a circumstance that ought to be highly gratifying to your feelings?"

"Would you have me fool enough to cry for joy, when I am able to laugh?"—retorted her brother; "mirth being, in *my* opinion, the highest exercise of our intellectual powers. Man is the only laughing animal in creation; for the laugh of the hyæna is a vulgar error, expunged from all modern editions of Buffon.—Sir Erasmus L'Estrange will attest that he spent some time in the desert, among those much misrepresented quadrupeds, without extracting from them more than a broad grin."

"How can you be so childish!"—exclaimed his sister,—discerning the hollowness of his spirits in all this rodomontade.

"How, rather, can I be otherwise?" rejoined Philip. "When I was a child, I was forced to put away childish things; and having been made at five years old grave as a judge, at five-and-twenty let me enjoy the privilege of which I was defrauded."

To argue with him seriously in his present mood, Lady Uppingham saw would be useless. It was pleasanter therefore to discuss those family interests which provoked no dissension.

"Eden Castle seems to have grown more sociable since *our* time," said she.—"Emma has better spirits than I; and Henry exercises a certain influence over my father."

"Like the Roman knight who gave up the best of the argument to Cæsar, not caring to dispute with a man having fifty legions at his command, *I* knew better than to attempt opposition!"—rejoined Philip. "As to Henry, contention is his cue!—A fight with my father is good professional practice for him. Henry, you know, is for the bar; and about to be brought into parliament over my head. My father swears by his eloquence!"

"You were never at the trouble of exerting yours. Even in the case of Mrs. Saville, you scarcely raised your voice."

"*A quoi bon?* Did you never hear of the man, who, when Charles the First was king, was whipped by order of the Star-Chamber for calling the crest on his master's carriage a goose instead of a swan?—*I* should have undergone similar fustigation at Eden Castle, for persisting that my geese were swans!—But between ourselves, my dear sister," continued he, in deprecation of her wrath, "I attribute the recent gaiety of Eden Castle to less ostensible causes than the influence of Henry or Emma. Percy's demands from Verdun are becoming heavier than is compatible with an entailed estate; and, retrenchment being the order of the day, my father's pride chooses to put a good face upon the matter. His ball purported only to divert attention. The old story!—The tail of Alcibiades' dog."

"You really think my father embarrassed in his circumstances?" said Lady Uppingham, in a tone of deep regret. "Perhaps so; for his family is indeed a large one, and the demands upon him

considerable.—How fortunate, Philip, that we two are provided for!”

Afraid perhaps of a more direct reference to his obligations towards her husband, Philip instantly looked at his watch, and rose to take leave.

“Any commands for Saint James’s Street?” said he. “I fear I must be off to Brookes’s!”

“To Brookes’s?—I thought my father had got you into Boodle’s?”—said the simple-hearted Margaret.

“Heaven preserve me from his lordship’s club!—I should as soon think of employing his tailor!” said Philip, about to quit the room. “But by the time my little nephew in expectation is old enough to profit by my example, I promise you, my dear good sister, to twaddle down to the level of Boodle’s. By that time I shall have become a model man!—As poet Pye said or sang to us the other night,—

Fired with a sacred flame
For Albion’s cause, and Freedom’s glorious name,
Firm in the House of Commons will I stand,
Petitions from constituents in my hand;—
Hurl bolts of vengeance on Oppression’s head,
While living honoured, and revered when dead!”

CHAPTER VII.

*Debout sur des débris, l’orgueilleuse Angleterre,
La menace à la bouche, et la gloire à la main,
Réclame encore la guerre et veut du sang humain.
Elle, dont le trident, asservissant les ondes,
Usurpa les trésors et les droits des deux mondes.*

M. J. CHÉNIER.

*Nodigan que es menester
Mucho tiempo para amar,
Que el amor que ha de motar
De un golpe ha de ser.*

MARQUES DE LAS NAVAS.

Luckily, perhaps, for the Marquis of Uppingham, his mind was just then diverted from the aspect of public affairs, by the absorbing interests of home.—For it was a black moment for the Pittites!—Lord Askham, in the virulence of his Anti-Gallicism, was forced to retire daily into his lair, to brood in gloomy silence over the victories and conquests attributed by even the most passive of papers to the valour of France, and blunders of Austria:—the newly-fledged eagles of the Brummagem Emperor being everywhere triumphant over

*L’aquila grifagna
Che per più divorar, duoi rostri porta!*

As in the reign of Julian, the prodigious consumption of white bulls for sacrifice, compelled the priests to shave the black spots from speckled ones, in order to supply appropriate victims for the altar, the choristers of Notre Dame were said to be hoarse as ravens, from the perpetual chanting of "Te Deum!"—

At length, came the unkindest cut of all;—that fatal battle of Austerlitz,—the Pavia of Francis II,—the Mantes of William the Conquered! Just as Lord Uppingham was rendering thanks to heaven for the birth of a son and heir and the safety of his young Marchioness, his exultation was painfully modified by the loss of his venerated friend.

The death of Pitt was followed by a change of administration. The Marquis was bereaved not only of his friend, but his place:—nor did he repine at a privation which left him at liberty to retire into private life, for the cultivation of his newly-acquired domestic joys. But he was too good a patriot, or too strenuous a party-man, not to survey with intense interest the struggle that ensued.

For the politicians of Europe were playing a desperate game,—knee-deep in blood, with human hearts for counters; and the measures of such a moment are somewhat more exciting than maundering debates upon a new rate of postage, or old tax on leather. Millions of men and millions of money, lay at the mercy of a division; and the scales wherein fluctuated the destinies of Europe, were balanced in the parliament of Great Britain.

Infatuated by party-spirit, aggravated in the present instance by the recent loss of his friend, Lord Uppingham was goaded out of his usual statesman-like moderation, by the triumphant attitude of the Whigs; and it was fortunate, perhaps, that the straw still spread before the gates of Uppingham House, and the consequent exclusion of company, secured him against collision with his brother-in-law. Philip, a member of Brookes's,—Philip, fresh from the prompting of Bob Hardyng, and stimulated by the nine-times-nine of Eske Hill,—would have been insupportable!—Already Sir James Hardyng had been restored to his office by the new administration, and the patent of his peerage was in progress; while Robert wrote himself down M. P. under favour of a government borough.

Philip himself might have regarded with a jealous eye this sudden advancement of his colleague, had it been easy to entertain injurious sentiments towards Bob. But he was such a frank, off-hand fellow, that enmity was out of the question! Idolized by his parents, he could not conceive himself an object of displeasure to any living mortal; and so peremptory were his demands on the sympathy of his friends, that denial was impossible.—His bright eyes seemed to kindle brightness in the eyes they looked on: his warm heart to create warmth in those with whom he consorted.—While Philip Askham remained "Philip" with everybody but his coaching cousin, Robert was "Bob Hardyng" with all the world. Those who

abhorred the liberalism of Sir James, and dreaded his latitudinarianism, had a corner in their hearts for Bob!

Though Philip had abstained from requiting the hospitalities of Eske Hill, by presenting his young colleague to his family in return, it was less because afraid that his free and easy manners, and saucy Gallomania might offend the pragmaticality of Lord and Lady Askham, than from reluctance to expose to his quizzing the tedious inanity of the house. By comparison with the cultivated brilliancy of the Hardynges set, *his* home was an owl's nest!

One day, however, as they were driving together in Hardynges's phaeton towards the House of Commons, a glimpse of the family coach of all the Askhams, stopping before the gates of Uppingham House, reminded Philip to make formal inquiries after his sister and the little Earl, to whom his lady-mother appeared to be paying a visit.

"And who was that lovely girl in the corner of the carriage?" demanded Bob, starting his horses with renewed spirit, as soon as Philip had obtained at the carriage-window more particular "particulars" than the stereotyped "As well as can be excepted" of the porter.

"One of my sisters."

"You have other sisters, then, than the Marchioness of Uppingham?"

"Two!—nay, by Jove, *three*!—Emma, whom you saw me speaking to just now, was presented at the last drawing-room."

"Strange that I should not have noticed her!—I never saw a more piquant countenance!"

"One seldom notices the countenances of one's sisters," replied Philip, coldly.

"Does not one?—I ask for information, being an only child. It strikes me, however, as difficult to overlook that of Miss Askham!"

"Emma's?" repeated his companion, in an absent manner,—his thoughts still engrossed by Uppingham House.

"By your leave, *Miss Askham's*!"—persisted Hardynges, with a smile; "though proud to be called 'Bob' by any member of your august family, as the moon said to the sun, 'Sir! I know my distance!'"

He knew it so well, apparently, as to be determined on its diminution. Reminiscences of the fair face he had discerned in Lady Askham's carriage so haunted his mind, that an irresistible attraction seemed to place Uppingham House in the direct road to every place he had to visit. Whatever Philip's engagements, Bob and his phaeton were always at his disposal; till at length, one afternoon, as they were traversing the dreary wilds of Portland Place, Hardynges reminded his friend, as if *à l'improviste*, of a long-standing promise to take him to Mansfield Street for the sight of a

fine Cuyp, which Philip had cited as the companion to a landscape by the same master, adorning the dining-room at Eske Hill.

Impossible to refuse! Thanks to the spirit of Hardyng's horses, in a moment, they were at the door; and a great relief was it to Philip, to learn from the solemn butler, that my lord was gone to Downing Street, and my lady to Uppingham House.

"The pictures, however, must be at home!" cried Bob, who flattered himself he could discern the outline of a slender form behind the muslin curtains of the drawing-room; a suspicion agreeably justified when, having followed Philip up stairs, they were welcomed by a tall graceful girl, whom he recognized as his angel of the family coach, even previous to the slight introduction vouchsafed by his friend of, "Miss Askham—Mr. Hardyng."

To his great surprise, however, her formal curtsey in acknowledgment of her new acquaintance was followed by an equally formal request that he would introduce his companion.

"His name may be Askham," as you assure me," said she, with affected gravity; "but believe me, he is a total stranger in this house!"

"I am sorry my visits make so little impression!" retorted Philip, in the same spirit. "It strikes me I have dined here occasionally since your return to town."

"I hope you do not mean to impose the deaf and dumb gentleman who sat by papa at dinner on Thursday last, as the charming Mr. Askham, of whom I have heard such wonders lately, from my cousin Helen—and others!" added she, in a significant tone.

Philip cared little for the praise of his cousin Helen. The mysterious supplement piqued his curiosity. But he was not allowed to pursue his inquiries. Bob Hardyng was scarcely the man to be defrauded of his share of attention.

By way of attracting towards himself one of the beaming looks at present monopolised by her brother, he expressed a hope that Lady Askham's visit to Uppingham House was not occasioned by an unfavourable change in the state of the Marchioness.

"Do I look as though my sister were in danger?"—said Emma, with precisely the sort of smile he hoped to elicit.—"No! mamma is only gone to hold a cabinet council with Margaret and the head nurse, concerning the number of yards of Valenciennes indispensable to bring a baby's cap to the dimensions of a bishop's wig. I, of course, am not on the matronly committee. By the way, gentleman in the blue and buff, whom I cannot call brother of mine!—are you aware that Margaret is trying to decoy Lord Uppingham from town, to spend the spring at the Manor?"

"That she may not make her *début* in the *beau monde* in the dowdy character of a nurse?"

"When did you ever know Margaret influenced by selfish motives?" cried Miss Askham. "Her object is simply to secure her

husband from the mortification of witnessing the defeat of his party. She is distracted, poor soul, between her dread lest he should stay in London, and expire under the slow fever of parliamentary debate; or the country be lost for want of his omnipotent protection!"

"And she applies to *my mother* for advice in such a dilemma?"—demanded Philip, with a sarcastic smile.

"No!—for comfort in her afflictions!" was Miss Askham's reproving rejoinder. "No balm so healing to a woman's wounds as mother-love; nor are *we* grown too fine to be fond of each other, dear Philip, like certain great men of our acquaintance. The humdrum hearts of Edenbourne are still 'open as day to melting charity! And, by the way," continued she, warned by his overclouded face to change the conversation, "I have a present for you, which I had not courage to offer to the supercilious gentleman who dined here on Thursday last."

"A *present*?" repeated her brother, immediately adding an assurance of the pleasure he should feel in receiving any token of her affection.

"*My* affection!" cried Miss Askham, "*mine*? The poor, stupid little Emma, on whom you used to cast such contemptuous glances at Eden Castle, when in disgrace six days in the week, with Miss Harrison, for not knowing her tables? No, Philip! the promised *cadeau* is from one far dearer to you. So, at least, I presume, or she would not talk of you with an earnestness of enthusiasm more than rivalling that of my cousin Helen."

With all his apathy, inherent and acquired, Philip could not listen to all this without emotion. He made no answer, however, unwilling to risk the steadiness of his voice in pronouncing the name of Mrs. Saville.

"Askham is a lucky fellow," observed Hardyng, a little puzzled by the discomposure of his friend. "Offerings are laid upon his shrine in all parts of the kingdom at once! Like the sun, his smiles exercise their influence over a thousand dials! Had you seen him, Miss Askham, last night at Lady Grandison's drum, even *you*, who do not appear a *very* partial judge, would have pronounced him the most favoured of his sex."

"He *was* at Lady Grandison's, then?"—cried Emma, with a heightened colour. "The question was discussed at breakfast, between mamma and papa; who, in the teeth of that most authentic organ of fashion, the 'Morning Post,' denied the possibility that a son of theirs should have caused the family name to be announced in the head-quarters of the enemy."

"But your present, Emma!" interrupted her brother, anxious lest she should betray to his companion the narrow bigotry of his parents.—"Have a little mercy, child, on my patience."

Miss Askham, who had already opened a little ebony desk standing

on the table beside her, now carefully drew forth a small packet, enveloped in silver paper.

“If you could only have seen her blush, when she entrusted it to my hands,”—said she, placing it in those of her brother. And while Philip, with pretended unconcern, proceeded to open the mysterious packet, he could scarcely breathe, under the agitation of finding himself laid open at such a crisis to the cross-fire of his companions. Emma was not to be pardoned for her indiscretion in thus exposing his weakness.

A moment afterwards, he was still further provoked by a peal of girlish laughter from his giddy sister, produced by the air of consternation with which he surveyed his prize—a clumsy pocket-book of straw-work, evidently the first effort of a child.

“Selina’s own performance!” cried Miss Askham, in explanation; “dear, darling, little Selina!”—

“Darling and dear, if you will, but certainly not *adroite comme une fée!*” interposed Hardyng, repressing his merriment when he saw an angry spark kindle in the eyes of Philip.

“Whatever the blemishes of Selina’s handiwork,” observed the latter, struggling to recover his composure,

“Look in her face, and you forget them all!”

Selina is the prettiest little creature in the world!”

“And the truest-hearted!” added his sister, with enthusiasm. “An unflinching advocate of yours, Philip!—No one ever ventures to attack you in presence of Selina!”

“I am sorry any one should have attempted it, in presence of my sister!” was the bitter retort.

“Would you have me do battle in your behalf against a whole county?”—cried Emma, unmoved by his indignation. “However unbounded your popularity just now in London, be assured you are no favourite at Edenbourne!”—

Philip shrugged his shoulders, with an air of contemptuous resignation.

“It is painful to betray his failings before a friend, Mr. Hardyng,” resumed the gay girl; “but, alas! my brother has left behind him at Eden Castle, a reputation far from chivalrous! Our neighbourhood contains but three young ladies—not much sillier or more tiresome than young ladies in general; yet it is on record that Mr. Philip Askham was never known to address to either, one civil word! As to his mental accomplishments, we have a be-knighted author,—a tourist of many quartos,—who accuses him of being so to seek in his geography as to fancy that Monte Video was——But what answer am I to send to Selina!”—said she, abruptly interrupting herself, on perceiving that angry clouds were gathering on the brow of Philip.

“The eloquence of a box of sugar-plums would surely be the

most acceptable reply," interposed Hardyng, perceiving that his friend was in no mood to be gracious; on which, Philip, apprehensive, perhaps, that Lady Askham might return, and wax wroth on finding a stranger of Bob Hardyng's appearance so familiarly installed in the company of her unchaperoned daughter, suddenly alluded to the purport of their visit, which he proceeded to explain to his sister.

"Since Mr. Hardyng is fond of pictures," said she, as they were going down stairs to visit the Cuyp, "why not show him, first, the Claude in the back drawing-room?"—

"Because it is not an original."

"I will not try to convict you by my father's favourite argument, that it *must* be an original because my uncle gave two thousand pounds for it at Sir James Thornhill's sale.' But original or not, it is a noble painting."

Prepared at all risks to coincide in her opinion, Hardyng followed her light footsteps into an adjoining room, containing several admirable works of art, dimly perceptible by the misty light of a dreary February day, in a narrow London street.

"Claude, for a ducat!"—cried Hardyng, affecting to examine with the eye of an artist the picture she pointed out, (and he would probably have said the same of some group of animals by Snyders or Hondekæter.) "There cannot be a doubt of its originality!"

"De las cosas mas seguras,
La mas segura es dudar!"

sang Emma, with sprightly grace,—not a little amused by the *air capable* with which her visitor delivered his verdict.

"In this confounded light, what matters the utmost merit of a picture?" cried Philip. "My father ought to remove these things to Eden Castle!"

"As if any one had a right to bury the *chefs-d'œuvre* of the ancient masters in his country-seat?"—retorted his sister. "No, no! Papa cannot do better than immure the grim visages of his ancestors, or sullen faces of his children. But paintings like these should remain within reach of the public!"

"*That* sentiment was never conned out of the Pandects of the house of Askham!"—observed her brother, amused in his turn by her venturing to have opinions of her own.—"But come along, Bob! your phaeton horses, not being *cognoscenti* like yourself, appear to be getting fidgetty."

As they passed through the hall, Robert Hardyng took care not to remind his companion, (who, since the production of the pocket-book, had remained, like Pantagruel, *perplexe et esbahi*,) that the object of his visit was still unaccomplished,—that they had seen nothing of the Cuyp; hoping, perhaps, to insure a pretext for a second visit to the family mansion, containing among its valuable

works of art a child of nature so much *more* valuable, as the gay and gracious Emma.

“Lucky dog that you are, Philip,” cried he, as they drove from the door, “to possess such sisters and such pictures, yet afford to make no boast of them!—In your place, I should climb the old bronze horse at Charing Cross, and proclaim my good fortune by sound of trumpet! What beauty—what animation,—and what an exquisite Claude!”—added he as if afraid of betraying the whole measure of his enthusiasm.

“Emma seems to have grown up a lively girl!” was the *nonchalant* reply of his companion. “Her disposition resembles Percy’s, rather than mine. So much the worse for her. A will o’ the wisp is not a more dangerous guide to a traveller, than high spirits to a woman! Emma appears thoughtless enough to say more in an hour, than in a year she would find leisure to repent.—Emma is just the girl to create a host of enemies.”

“And troops of friends!”—added Bob Hardyng, with spirit: “open-hearted,—clear-headed,—what can you want more?”

“The feminine serenity of my elder sister! Margaret is so sedate, so gentle, so attaching!” said Philip, his thoughts reverting to another person,—no sister of his,—who was also gentle, attaching, and sedate.

“You have seen more of Lady Uppingham, as nearer your own age,” pleaded Bob, resolved not to be seduced from the cause of the hazel-eyed beauty, which he had instinctively adopted. “But you often allude to the high spirits of your brother Percy; and at Eton, he certainly left the reputation of being the merriest dog in the upper school. Yet the fragments you read me from his letters, abound in doleful dumps.”

“Percy’s accounts of himself are not always to be trusted,” replied Philip. “To suit his convenience, he goes into deep despair or a deep decline, without scruple or ceremony. When required to live in England, nothing agreed with him but France. Now that France is his home, English air has become vital to his health.”

“Askham’s letters are framed, perhaps, to meet the *surveillance* of the French police.”

“More likely to meet the *surveillance* of Eden Castle. I would give much for a little unrestrained intercourse with him,” added Philip, with a sigh. “All I hear from other quarters of his pursuits, is far from satisfactory. Verdun is a terrible school; and Percy is said to be equally a victim to the allurements of *rouge et noir*, and red and white.”

“Why does not Lord Uppingham interfere to effect his exchange?”—inquired Hardyng, more gravely.

“When in power, his efforts were unavailing; what possible chance *now*?”

“But *you*, Philip,—you have friends high in the confidence of

the present administration;—and a word from Mr. Fox to the Emperor would surely suffice?”—

“Of course it would; but who could ask it of him, for my father’s son?”—

“Your friend’s father to be sure!” was the prompt rejoinder of Hardyng. “I will mention it to him directly; and the first time you come to Eske Hill, you can talk it over together.”

Philip made suitable acknowledgments:—though without much expectation of a favourable result. For some time past, his assiduity at Eske Hill had insensibly relaxed. The place was not what it had been. Since Sir James’s accession to office, he had resided in town—in the *Pays Latin*, or rather *pays perdu* of the lawyers,—the isthmus of Bloomsbury, uniting the great continents of court and city; a rusty grappling iron between business and pleasure.—It was only on Saturdays he now visited his *rus in urbe*, to luxuriate in the two days’ holiday of the official week.

The spell of continuity was consequently broken. The establishment was disorganized; and worse than the establishment, the society itself was out of joint.

No greater mistake than to attribute a double charm to the recreations snatched in the intervals of a busy life. A school-boy alone is young enough to enjoy his vacation with a vague conviction that it is morrowless. On the mind of Sir James, the weighty duties of a responsible post cast their shadows before, even while presiding over his convivial board:—nay, the board itself had become *less* convivial. Topics once freely discussed there, would have been out of place in presence of the law advisers of the Crown; and diatribes regarded as an excellent joke by members of the opposition, had become sad earnest, to government men. Often, when some literary guest, over whom the change of administration had exercised no positive influence, hazarded a fling at *la chose publique*, such as aforetime would have set the table in a roar, silence and consternation ensued.

Even Bob Hardyng was conscious of the change. Some weeks after his memorable visit to Mansfield Street, having persuaded Philip to accompany him to Eske Hill to enjoy the first outburst of spring in the form of violets and jonquils, he could not repress his murmurs on their way back, on the Monday morning, to town.

“We are getting deadly lively here,” said he, as they quitted his father’s gate; “dull and donkeyfied as other great people!—No fun going on among us *now*. Nothing but after-dinner debates, drowsy enough to drive even the House of Commons to its night cap. Instead of squibs and crackers, we fire off only four-and-twenty pounders,—solemn as the minute guns at a royal funeral!—My father, so brilliant a few months ago, prosed, as if eternally on the bench;—colons and semi-colons, by Jove, in every sentence!—I am beginning to believe, Philip, that no public man obtains a

bronze statue from posterity, unless, in his lifetime, he become a statue of lead!"

Philip Askham's unadvised rejoinder was not flattering.

"Sir James is not at ease in his new habiliments," said he; "the armholes are still tight,—the buckram of office is stiff."

"Not stiffer for *him* than for his colleagues."

"The transition from private to public life, is greater, perhaps, to a lawyer."

"Why, what more public than a life spent in court?"—cried Hardyng, eagerly.

"A life spent *at* court!"—was the cool rejoinder of Philip. "What difference, for instance, does it make to my brother-in-law, whether in or out of office?—From his cradle to his coffin, *his* life must be a life of representation!"

In spite of himself, Bob Hardyng felt exceedingly nettled. A few weeks before, and he would have retorted with playful frankness, "Is it because we are *parvenus*, then, that we are all bores?"—But now, convinced that his admiration of Emma had not escaped the notice of her brother, he fancied that the disparity of condition between them was purposely pointed out. Else, why this gratuitous allusion to "my brother-in-law?"

A moment afterwards, his suspicions received further confirmation.

"Emma has written to bespeak my influence with my father and mother," said he, "to obtain leave for her to accompany the Uppinghams to the North."

"To Uppingham Manor!—At *this* season of the year?"—

"Absurd—is it not?—I suspect she wants to get out of the way of Middlemore; who has taken it into his empty head that, next to his team and black retriever, Emma is the finest thing in creation!"

"The brute!"—

"My cousin-german—be pleased to remember; and one day, perhaps, to be my brother-in-law."

"You surely do not think Miss Askham would accept him!"—cried Hardyng in dismay.

"What girl of eighteen has strength of mind to refuse Hurstwood Castle and fifty thousand a-year? Besides, Middlemore, though no Solon, is the best-natured creature breathing. Emma might do what she liked with him. More than might be the case with others, in *essentials* far his inferior."

Again did Bob Hardyng wince,—fancying himself talked at.

"What do you mean by 'essentials?'"—said he, looking straight between the ears of his off horse.

"Rank—fortune—a fitness of things and compatibility of condition between them. In short, she has *my* consent to marry him, if she can obtain her own; and I shall, therefore, strongly oppose her desire to leave town with the Uppinghams."

"With all his professions of liberality, Askham is as much en-

crusted with aristocratic *morgue* as the rest of his caste!"—exclaimed Bob, when, half an hour afterwards, he quitted his companion; and, with tingling ears, proceeded to the discharge of his official duties. "The indelible sign of the beast!" continued he, with a gesture of impatience, on recalling to mind the unwarrantable caprice recently exhibited by the Askhams towards his father, in the matter of Percy's exchange.

For the services of Sir James had not only been rejected, but under circumstances to compromise his own character for consistency. Connected with Mr. Fox by the silken ties, of private life as well as by the chain-cable of political confraternity, on learning the negotiations for the exchange of the Earl of Yarmouth and other *détenus* of consideration, Sir James had not hesitated to request the insertion in the ministerial list of the name of the Honourable Percy Askham; and having been the companion of Fox's visit to Paris, on the peace of Amiens, and shared his introduction to the First Consul, by whom both were received with signal distinction, the recommendation of Sir James Hardynges had been especially appended to the request.

All was in auspicious progress; and Philip had the satisfaction of conveying the welcome news to his father, and receiving the acknowledgments of Lord Askham in return; when, by the gossiping of Lord Askham's lady, the intelligence was unluckily conveyed to Uppingham House.

The Marquis, just then at the crisis of his party fever,—confounding Napoleon, Fox, and Sir James Hardynges in a common detestation,—treated the whole transaction as a political intrigue.

"A snare, my dear lord," cried he to his father-in-law,—“a palpable snare! In this age of coalitions, a shrewd fellow, like your republicanized special pleader, thinks to entrap you by an obligation.—All he wants is to secure the future member for Edenbourne.”

"If I thought so, I would instantly decline his interposition," cried Lord Askham, whose sullen mind was ever prompt to adopt suggestions of mistrust.

"The whole thing is a cunning cabal," persisted Lord Uppingham. "These people have got hold of Philip, and hope to get hold of *you*! Believe me, you would stand grievously committed with our party, by trafficking with the Whigs."

"It is not too late! Nothing has yet been done,"—cried Lord Askham, staggered and confused. "Philip must acquaint his friends that I wish matters to stand as they are. He can put it upon the state of Percy's health,—or upon—no matter what! Since such the object of this Whig lawyer's interested officiousness, I care little whether he be affronted or not!"

By Philip, accordingly, the ungracious task of refusal was reluctantly performed; and though Sir James, an experienced public

man, had little difficulty in assigning the impertinent caprice of Lord Askham to the dictation of his arbitrary son-in-law, Robert, inspired by the susceptibility of a dawning passion, chose to infer that the Askhams could not make up their minds to accept a favour from a family whose alliance and origin they despised.

“If a son or brother of mine were a *détenu* in the hands of the enemy,” murmured he, with growing bitterness, “methinks I should accept his liberation at the claws of Belzebub himself! But from Belzebub, people of the Askham class would *rather* accept it, than from a man like my father,—*le fils de ses œuvres*—and unconnected with their self-seeking order.”

The antipathies inseparable from ignoble birth had been fostered by his visit to the French metropolis; where a glimpse of consular fame in all her glory, had enamoured the heart of young Hardyng of her republican institutions. Dazzled by the showy surface of the Mosaic, he had no time to detect that its brilliancy was produced by well-adjusted particles of coloured glass; and neither his schoolboy friendship with Philip Askham and other Etonian items of nobility, nor even his dawning passion for Emma, availed to obliterate from his nature the democratic tendencies of the *parvenu*.

Little did Bob surmise, however, that at the very moment he was indulging in his philippic, his noble colleague was giving utterance to invectives nearly as vehement, against the folly and ingratitude of his family, in having declined the friendly interposition of Sir James, which would have preserved them from new misfortunes.

The first thing that met Philip Askham's eye on repairing to his office, was a letter in Percy's handwriting; and inferring from the unusual circumstance of its being addressed to Somerset House that it might contain matters too confidential to be intrusted to the rest of the family, he tore it open with warmer interest than he had latterly bestowed on anything bearing the postmark of Verdun.

But though the sequel confirmed his conjectures, he would far rather have found himself in the wrong. Percy had not only confidences to make, but services to demand; appealing to the aid of his brother, as to that of a good Samaritan;—for he also “had fallen among thieves.”

Not a syllable of those flippant allusions to the dulness of home and denseness of his family circle, anticipated by Philip.—No romancing—no rodomontad!—For once, Percy was in earnest; for once, Percy wrote to the point:—for his *interests* were staked on his sincerity!

“Adopt the best mode that circumstances and your experience suggest,” wrote he, “of breaking to my father what, smooth it over as you will, must be a startling blow.—I need not tell you, my dear Phil, that, in this accursed place, play is our sole resource against the heaviness of time.—It is no fault of ours!—Our lives

are a very burthen to us; and the excitement of cards has preserved more than one of my unfortunate fellow-prisoners from cutting his throat. Let my father inquire of Lord Yarmouth, (who, having been so fortunate as to procure his exchange, will shortly be among you,) whether we are not forced to have recourse to some such pungent interest, to lose sight of our wretched situation!

“In short, my dear fellow, my usual ill-fortune has attended me; and, as the devil would have it, I am *in* for no less a sum than 16,000 *l.*! for more than half of which, I have been compelled to give bills at sight, and for the remainder three months’ acceptances. For these, my father must instantly provide. Not alone is my own credit at stake, but that of my country. Were I in England, instead of exposing Lord Askham to inconvenience, and myself to his Jeremiads, Jews and post-obits would be the mark!—Here, accommodation to such an amount, is out of the question; and I have, therefore, no means of suspending the domestic storm, the explosion of which I do not envy you!

“Say what you can, and promise what you will for me to the old gentleman. Tell him I will join in mortgages to double the amount, which would cover all he has paid for me during the last three years.

“Above all, Phil, lose not a moment! Write to me, if possible, by return of post; and see that the first eight thousand is paid *instantly* through Coutts’s house to my credit at Perrégaux, or all is up with

“Your affectionate brother
P. A.”

“Confound his cool selfishness!”—was the first ejaculation of Philip, after perusing the letter. “And trebly confound the obstinacy of Lord Uppingham in rejecting Sir James Hardyng’s interference!” the second. To waste time, however, in fruitless recrimination, was weakness equal to their own.—Something must be instantly attempted.

But how—and where—and when? Philip admitted the limitation of his father’s resources. The hardness of the times had curtailed a third of Lord Askham’s income. Ill-paid rents and well-paid taxes left as small a floating capital at his disposal, as usually graces the banker’s book of a peer of the realm, whose family is large and cerebral development, moderate. There would probably be as much difficulty in producing at a moment’s notice the alarming sum squandered by Philip, as in negotiating an Austrian loan!—

“How unlucky that the Uppinghams should have left town,” cried he. “The Marquis might have given me useful advice; and Margaret’s good sense and good feeling would have assisted me to place the matter before my father, in the manner least irritating to his feelings.”

A moment later, and he congratulated himself that the Uppinghams were out of the way. It would have annoyed him to expose the frantic rage of his father to a man so much the master of his temper, as his brother-in-law; nor could he be certain that, when weary of abusing Percy's extravagance, Lord Askham might not turn upon *him* by whose injudicious advice he had been tempted to perpetuate the injurious exile of his son.

"Not a soul in my own family to whom I can turn for counsel!" cried he; after passing in review, like files of leaden soldiers, the heavy brigade of his noble relations.—"Not a human being in whom I can confide!"

Then, seizing his hat and gloves, in a fit of desperation, he left the business of the country to take care of itself; and hoping to find Lord Askham before he went out for the day, proceeded in blind haste to Mansfield Street.

CHAPTER VIII.

*Hic vivimus ambigua
Paupertate omnes.*

JUVENAL.

Ye see yon birkie ca'd a' lord,
Wha struts and stares and a' that,
Though hundreds worship at his word
He's but a coof for a' that.

BURNS.

Precisely as Philip had prognosticated from the regular habits of the family, before his father's door stood a ponderous family coach, bearing on all its panels the pompous emblazonments of the house of Askham; its pair of broad-backed bean-fed horses, strong and heavy in proportion, dozed over by a portly body-coachman, whose gravity would have become the woolsack equally with his bullionned hammercloth.

On the opposite side of the street, was stationed, what was then considered, "a clever turn out,"—a light barouche with four greys, whose heads, the box being vacant, were held by natty grooms in the Middlemore livery; towards whom glances were ever and anon directed from under the bushy eyebrows of the body-coachman, conveying as strong an impression of disgust as was compatible with a frame as fleshy as Falstaff's, and a nature as jovial.

Lord Middlemore was evidently paying his daily visit to his cousin Emma, wooing her, as Desdemona was courted by the Moor, with accounts of his hair-breadth 'scapes, in racing to

Bedfont or Staines with his co-mates of the barouche club,—his bets at the Fives' Court, or milling-bouts with Molyneux or Cribb.

For such fooling, Philip had just then nor bent nor patience ; but the urgency of the case determined him at all events to enter the house ; and, if unable to obtain a private audience of Lord Askham, communicate his painful intelligence by a letter, which he could indite in his lordship's study.

The first object, however, that struck him on entering the sanctum sanctorum, was his father in proper person ; deeply ensconced in his library chair, with a French dictionary in one hand, and in the other a copy of the Emperor's recent speech to the Legislative body ; trying to make out, as well as his preparatory-school proficiency in the language of the "Corsican blackguard" would allow, the exact temperature of his imperial majesty's intentions towards Great Britain, as by Charles Maurice de Talleyrand expounded.

On the entrance of Philip, he attempted to explain what he had been vainly trying to understand ; for between his desire for a Whig peace, that his son might be rescued from the hands of the Philistines, and his delight in the Tory war of extermination, by which Europe might be rescued from the clutches of Napoleon, he was completely puzzled !

To wait for the lucidation of his lordship's intellects, was, at a crisis like the present, impossible. In a few words, therefore, Philip explained the painful purport of his visit,—satisfied that words, on his lordship's part, would not be wanting.

Still, he was not prepared for the torrents of indignation that burst forth, after learning the onerous misdoings of his son.

Lord Askham protested, with frantic violence, that, already embarrassed by Percy's extravagance, this new demand was a fiat of ruin to the family ; and, not content with announcing it to Philip, rushed up to the drawing-room into the midst of his assembled family, and repeated in hoarse and struggling accents all he had learnt and all he had been saying.

Regardless of young Middlemore's presence, he denounced Percy as lost to all sense of decency and honour,—as a scoundrel, a spendthrift, a gambler !—"Percy was bringing his family to the work-house,—Percy was taking the bread out of the mouths of his brothers and sisters. Percy had obtained leave to go abroad by an ungentlemanly imposture ; and, when summoned back to England by his parents, had chosen to go round by Toulouse !"

Scared by his uncle's vituperations, Lord Middlemore slunk sheepishly away. But even when left alone again with Philip, the exasperated man could not be persuaded to turn his thoughts to remedial measures. On this occasion, he would *not* speak to old Coutts ;—he would *not* consult his man of business, he would *not* ascertain what funds were at his disposal. Satisfied that Percy's vicious propensities would reduce him sooner or later to beggary,

he chose to fancy himself ruined at once.—“He had no longer a guinea in the world.—They were all paupers!”

In his total ignorance of the state of the family affairs, Philip began to fear that his father’s denunciations might be only too well-founded. When he talked of timber, Lord Askham made it clear that with thousands of acres of woodlands, he had not a tree to cut down; and when he spoke of mortgages, it was explained that Percy’s co-operation could not be afforded unless on the spot. As a last resource, he suggested the name of his wealthy brother-in-law.

“Rather than that Percy should be thrown into prison, might not temporary aid be obtained from the Marquis, on security valid between peer and peer, or father and son, though insufficient for bankers and usurers?”

It needed but this hint to renew the paroxysms of Lord Askham! The name of Lord Uppingham suggested that but for *him*, Percy might be now at liberty! But for his evil counsel, instead of hazard and rouge et noir, lansquenet, and roulette, Percy might have been enjoying his domestic pool of commerce in Mansfield Street, and the *dolce far niente* of representing the borough of Edenbourne!—Next to Percy therefore, the greatest enemy Lord Askham possessed at that moment was the most noble the Marquis of Uppingham.

To bring him to listen to reason was like preaching moderation to “the vexed Bermoothes!” So profusely and publicly had Lord Askham attributed to his absent son every christian grace and manly virtue likely to make a martyr of the young *détenu* in the eyes of the king and his ministers, that it seemed a relief to his conscience, as well as to his temper, to proclaim the tardy truth; and Philip was beginning to apprehend that, in default of other auditors, the old butler and housekeeper might be rung for to learn the *real* character of the heir of their master’s house, when Emma, who had quitted the room half an hour before with her mother, to commune over the family misfortune in their chamber, suddenly reappeared on the threshold, holding an open letter in her hand.

The sight of open letters was becoming sickening to Philip!—But with the one in question, it would have been hypercritical to find fault, though the writing was bad, the spelling worse, and the style more than indifferent.

“A noble fellow!—a most generous offer!” cried he, after running over the contents.

Then, perceiving that Lord Askham was unequal to the task of decipherment, he explained in terms somewhat more succinct than those of the letter, that Lord Middlemore had enclosed an order upon Baring for the sum in demand; entreating that Emma would “persuade her father to make use of the balance lying idle in his banker’s hands.”

It was as natural for Philip to hope, as for Emma to fear, that the

offer would be thankfully accepted, and all immediate difficulty at an end. But they were mistaken. Lord Askham was not going to be cheated in that way out of his privilege of being the most unfortunate man and ill-used father in the universe. After profiting by his nephew's assistance, what right would he have to weary his family by perpetual murmurs, to harass them by his economies, to revile the interference of Lord Uppingham, or Percy's predilection for Toulouse?—No!—he chose to be a victim to his heart's content. Like Jaffier, "he was in love, and pleased with ruin!"—

Emma was requested therefore to inform Lord Middlemore that her father intended "to trust to his own resources;" and in the overflowing of her joy at not being forced to incur so great an obligation towards one she liked as a kinsman, but as a companion for life must have despised, she prepared herself to clothe the intelligence in somewhat more gracious terms than were dictated by Lord Askham. Her warm heart was *really* touched by the good-nature and generosity with which her coaching cousin had hurried off to place his fortune at her disposal.

"*In nocte consilium!*" thought Philip. "To-morrow may bring forward better fruit. Communicate with my brother by this day's post, I cannot; and the suspense will afford him a useful lesson. But by the morning, my father will have stormed himself into a calm, and be prepared for rational expostulation."

The morrow, however, brought only a transition from rage to sullenness.

"All was over for him," Lord Askham said, "in this world. His lawyers assured him nothing could be done towards raising money by mortgage, in the absence of the heir in tail; and his balance at his banker's did not amount to a quarter of the sum demanded with such cool audacity by Percy."

"My brother must prepare, then, for the worst," muttered Philip, after a dismal pause, wondering in what words to convey this fatal fiat to the *détenu*. "There is nothing further to be done."

"*Who* told you there was nothing more to be done?"—cried Lord Askham, with rekindling anger. "Of course there is something to be done,—however humiliating,—however vexatious. We must discharge the greater portion of our establishment,—we must resign the luxuries, not to say comforts, of life!—We must live, in short, like beggars, in order that this ungrateful profligate may be supported in his career of vice!"

"But even all these sacrifices, my lord, painful as well as gratuitous as they may be," pleaded Philip, "will require time for their fructification; and before you are able to lay by the sum indispensable to the security of my brother——"

"*Well, sir?*" interrupted Lord Askham, wondering to what further insult was about to be exposed the most injured parent since the days of Lear.

“I observed, my lord, that before you could provide the money, or one half of it, some years must elapse.”

“You suppose me, then, utterly devoid of friends or resources?”—exclaimed Lord Askham, livid with rage. “No, sir, the first moiety of the enormous sum squandered by your unprincipled brother has already been remitted to Messieurs Perrégaux. I am just come from the Strand. I have made an arrangement with Coutts. On my note of hand, the money was instantly advanced.”

Philip was unable to repress a cry of exultation. He soon found he had done amiss.

“What are you so glad of?—Is it a matter, pray, for rejoicing, that I am to be driven out of town at this season of the year; at a time, too, so momentous to the interests of the country and the prospects of your sister?”

“Surely it would be as easy to effect such reductions in your establishment as you consider indispensable, in London as in the country?” remonstrated Philip, in a respectful tone.

“No, sir; it is neither so easy nor so palatable,” retorted his father. “Do not deny me the poor comfort of burying the disgraces of my family in a spot where I am entitled to sympathy. At Eden Castle, I may at least seclude myself from the slights of the world.”

Philip offered no further opposition. In Lord Askham’s present frame of feeling, he was capable, if detained in town, of haranguing Boodle’s, day after day, on the misdemeanours of his son and disorder of his finances; or even memorializing the treasury, or petitioning parliament, concerning the demoralization of loyal British subjects, by the contagion and example imbibed during their detention in France. Better, certainly, that he should proceed to Eden Castle.

All was speedily arranged. The family might quit town as for the Easter holidays, and forbear to return. No surprise would be excited. Lord Askham had no public part to play in politics, and his private position too insignificant to render his comings or goings of much importance.

“As regards my nephew Middlemore,” observed Lady Askham, confidentially to her son, on the eve of the journey, “as one of the family, *he* of course can visit Edenbourne, as easily as Mansfield Street; and I have invited my sister and Helen to spend Easter-week with us, to give a colouring to his visit. Depend on it, Philip, we shall soon have him at Eden Castle.”

As this expectation afforded balm to her maternal wounds, Philip refrained from intreating she would *depend* upon the contrary. For already Emma had deputed him, as plenipotentiary and intermediary general of the family, to explain to her cousin the impossibility of requiting his generous services by other than cousinly regard; nor had Philip’s remonstrances availed more against her determination to refuse his hand, than they had done against Mar-

garet's acceptance of Lord Uppingham's. It was clear he was not intended by providence to become conscience-keeper to his sisters.

"Since you are so bent on having Hurstwood Castle in the family," said Emma, after listening patiently to the reproaches which he called arguments,—“persuade my cousin to wait a year or two for Susan. Susan will be just the wife for him. Susan has the same tastes, the same warm-hearted, blunder-headed generosity. Susan outrides and outruns the bravest of her brothers; and whenever Miss Harrison can be got out of the way at Eden Castle, will catch the wildest of the foals loose in the park, and witch the deer and the nursery-maids by her noble ponyship. At some future time, Susan will mount the box with poor Middlemore, and be thankful.”

“And Emma might, even now, bring him down from it, and be happy!” retorted Philip.

“On the contrary, were I fated to become his wife, (which not the worst possible behaviour of all my brothers united shall effect!) I would have him nailed to his barouche-seat for the remainder of his days. Never should I wish to see him otherwise than with the reins in his hands.”

“In short, Miss Emma Askham, like Miss Lydia Languish, pleads guilty to the self impeachment of choosing to marry for love!”

“Why not add (as your friend, Mr. Hardyng, did the other day) that first love is the convulsion incident on our second teething?—Why not invent something pungent on the indelicacy of selecting a husband by the heart, rather than the head?—Can you devise no striking epigram on the childishness of preferring a crust of bread and liberty, to Hurstwood and the society of a man as companionable as the mastiff in his court-yard?”

“I perceive, my dear Emma,” said her brother, gravely, “that Miss Harrison *has* been got out of the way lately, oftener than when I was a state-prisoner with you at Eden Castle.—Margaret looked upon these things with other eyes than yours.”

“We see according to the instincts God has given us!”—replied Emma; “and the spectacles affixed to my eyes by Miss Harrison, have not rendered me short-sighted. *My* inclinations are not as Margaret's! If I did not love my husband—love him very differently too, from her regard for her dictatorial Marquis,—I will not answer for myself, Philip, that,—one day or other I might not—”

She paused, and fixed her eyes portentously on her brother.

“Might not—*what?*” persisted Philip, somewhat alarmed.

“*Poison him!*”—replied Emma, in a hoarse voice, distorting her pretty face by a melo-dramatic grimace; “particularly,” added she, laughing heartily at the sudden recoil of Philip, “particularly if addicted to coaching,—boxing,—rat hunting,—gin-punch,—and the other ennobling predilections of my cousin Middlemore!”

“And pray, my little Emma,” resumed her brother,—amused in

spite of himself by her petulance,—“to whom are you indebted for this prodigious insight into the mysteries of the human heart?—Whom have you had lately at Eden Castle, to lecture you on a branch of the fine arts in *my* time so scrupulously interdicted, that we used to read out a family Shakspeare,—a family Homer,—a family Milton;—nay, if I remember, even Hannah More and Miss Edgeworth were Bowdlerized out of all allusion to the tender passion, ere they were suffered to enter the school-room!—Have the Miss Gwatkins been showing you their Valentines or has Sir Erasmus L'Estrange turned Romeo in his old age?”—

“Sir Erasmus *has* turned Romeo, though not to find a Juliet in *me*,”—cried Emma. “But I must be as dense as poor Middlemore himself, if, on such a subject, I applied for instruction to raw girls and boys, like the old Gwatkins, or our trusty knight of Edenbourne Lodge.—No, dearest Philip, if you must needs know the origin of my proficiency, learn that I am indebted for it to Mrs. Saville!”—

“I ascribed better taste to her,” rejoined Philip, drily, “than to indulge in conversation of such a nature, with a girl of your age.”

“Of *such* a nature!—of *what* nature? Do you imagine, my good brother, that on accompanying mamma to call at Eastfield, or when Mrs. Saville dined at the castle, I addressed her in the tone of Miss Harrison, and the style of Joyce’s Scientific Dialogues, with, “You informed me at our last meeting that first love was a combination of the neutral salt, youth, with oxymuriate of idleness. Let me hear what you have to say about interested marriages!”

Irresistible was Emma Askham’s mimicry of the shrill voice and pinched air of the governess; yet Philip was angry with himself for laughing.

“Give me credit, dear brother,” she resumed, “for cleverer management. To come at the result of Mrs. Saville’s married experience, I talked to her of the beauty of her children,—the sacrifices she was making for their sake,—and, above all, of the duty of encouraging the devotion of her superannuated swain, Sir Erasmus (for Edenbourne Lodge, you know, is Hurstwood to the tenant of Eastfield)! Thus it was I drew from her the confessions I wanted. She owned that, amid all her troubles, she had never repented her imprudent match;—that her married life had been a day of unclouded happiness;—and that not all the treasures of this world would induce her to give to Edward Saville’s orphans, a father unworthy to supply his place! From the intensity of love with which she talked of *them*, Philip, I was able to surmise the warmth of her attachment to her husband!”

Miss Askham paused; but *this* time her brother made no rejoinder. It was perhaps in pity to his confusion that Emma resumed her explanations.

“I could never love poor Middlemore with that sort of devotion!” said she. “For *him* I could not submit to bury myself in faithful

widowhood at Eastfield : and it is consequently out of my power, to become Emma, Lady Middlemore."

Philip Askham *seemed* to think so too ; though in truth he was thinking of something else. In a hurried absent manner, he promised to deliver her message to her cousin, and keep his rejection a secret from her parents (so as to spare her their fruitless remonstrances ;) and away he went, to indite his letter of congratulation to Percy, and ponder over the life and opinions of Evelyn Saville.

Less lax of counsel than his friend Hardyng, he judged it unnecessary to apprize *him* of all that had occurred.—Verdun was a topic he scrupulously avoided at Eske Hill ; and there was nothing more extraordinary to be accounted for in the untimely visit of Lord and Lady Askham to Eden Castle, than in the previous departure of the Uppinghams for the Manor.

Still, the consciousness of disingenuousness imparted a suspicious degree of embarrassment to his air, when announcing that they had left town.

"Leave town in March?—Leave town before Easter?—Leave town, with a hundred pleasant fêtes in prospect?"—was all the disappointed lover found to utter in reply ; and when Philip, instead of meeting the question with frankness, changed colour and looked uncomfortable, the young Lovelace of the *Pays latin* felt as convinced that his passion was evident to all the world, and that Lord Askham had withdrawn his family from London to secure himself against the annoyance of an impertinent proposal, as Philip that the letter of advice (advice not *commercially* speaking) which he had that morning despatched to his brother, would be laid aside unread till a more convenient season ; or, like other vexatious questions, adjourned *sine die*.

Thenceforward, there were two despairing Thyrsises, instead of one, to deface the government blotting-paper with initials, in his Majesty's public offices of Somerset House ; and as it was just then the fate of Robert Hardyng to flesh the maiden sword of his eloquence in the debate on the Order in Council for the detention of the Prussian ships, it is more than probable that the waspish tone of his speech, (which elicited the compliment of an ironical cheer from Canning,) was indebted for some portion of its gall to abhorrence of Tory noblemen, thrown into the system. It was not to his Eton chum, he could express *all* he felt towards Eden Castle.

Meanwhile the progress of the family into the country, was much as if following a hearse escutcheoned with their hereditary emblazonments. His lordship sat "nursing his wrath to keep it warm ;" his lady, who was in the habit of taking her tribulations cold, or at least with the chill off, remained silent as a mute ; and between her father's bursts of exasperation, and her mother's frigid taciturnity, Emma had a pleasant time of it ! Already, like her brother Philip

before her, she was looking forward to the kindly warmth of East-field, as the solace of her cares!

Edenbourne, on the other hand, was more puzzled than ever what sort of a face to put on, in welcoming its lawful authorities! However cautiously great people may seal their letters or close their doors, their secrets are sure to transpire; and the losses at play of Mr. Askham, magnified of course from fifteen thousand pounds to thirty, forty, and in remote parishes to fifty,—engrossed the attention of the neighbourhood. The family were said to be ruined,—the borough was whispered to be in the market.—Lady Askham was about to lay down her carriage,—and his lordship to apply for the poor nobleman's pension.

Still, as the intelligence was at present marked private and confidential, (no one being prepared to assert that it had been authenticated by the family,) it was decided in committee by the Gwatkins, Hackets, and Simprens, that no allusion should be hazarded to the subject, till it pleased Eden Castle to open its mouth and solicit their sympathy.

Any one in the secret, must have been amused to watch the eagerness with which, while pretending to impart the news of the parish and accept such items of fashionable small-talk as Lady Askham condescended to let fall in return, they examined the countenances of their noble hosts, for encouragement to put on a doleful face, and own that they knew the worst!

When Lord Askham, who, so far from intending to keep his sorrows to himself, was prepared to exhibit his wounds in the marketplace,—like Coriolanus

Show them the unaching scars which he should hide,—

and psalmodify his woes, as if proud of them, like some beggar of his blindness,—proclaimed his parental disappointments, and gave the signal to the Edenbourne orchestra for an overture in a minor key and five flats, the change of countenance of his auditors was instantaneous!

They had waited only his sanction to expand into their former chorus of ohs! and alases! (“the original powerful cast;”) and right welcome was it to the fractious old man, to find people who had still patience to make the responses in the proper places to his chapter of lamentations respecting Torquay and Toulouse; and to whom Lord Yarmouth and Sir James Hardyng were new *dramatis personæ* in the Askham tragedy. So comforted was he, in fact, by the polite attention of his auditory, that the families accustomed to dine once a year at the castle, during its palmy days, were thenceforward bidden once a week, to its Lenten entertainments.

Among those who expressed least on the occasion, perhaps because of all the neighbourhood alone really interested in the welfare of the family, was Mrs. Saville. Her ladylike nature would have

recoiled from vociferous condolences, like those of Mrs. Gwatkin or Simprens. But she shuddered at the idea of parents arrived at the age of the Askhams, being reduced to personal privations by the misconduct of one of their children; and was equally shocked that persons of their rank and education, had not the decency to keep it to themselves.

That her charming young friend at the castle should have been curtailed of her London pleasures, was also a subject of regret. But the worst grievance of all,—the only *real* grievance to Mrs. Saville,—was the fact announced by Emma at their first meeting, that Philip was now an established man-about-town; wholly disconnected from his family,—immersed in other friendships, acquaintanceships, and neighbourships,—devoted to opposite politics, and pretending to a line of frivolous distinction exclusively his own.

“Philip has brought himself to consider Eden Castle a *château en Espagne*,—‘the baseless fabric of a vision’ he never wishes to find realized!” said the gay girl. “I shall be surprised if we see him here again, within the next ten years!—Indeed, I doubt whether his *proneuse*, Lady Grandison, allows him to extend his absences from London further than Fulham!”

Pleasant intelligence this, for a woman to whom the prospect of his return had been as a far-off beacon, enabling her to traverse with courage a dreary morass!

For, though long blind to the nature of her sentiments towards Philip, and enlightened at last only by the void created in her heart by the loss of his society, after the first shock of discovery she never attempted to deceive herself again.

Few struggles, perhaps, are more painful to the human heart, than the first perception of its inconstancy to the memory of the dead. When faithless to the living, excuses are usually to be found, in their own conduct, or some moral or physical change. We are always entitled to say, (as the song does,) concerning those to whom we have “plighted an eternal vow,”

So altered are thy face and mind
'Twere perjury to love thee now!

But there is no such pretext as regards those holy memories consecrated by the stillness of the tomb. The sweet face we beheld enshrouded for the grave, cannot *since* have frowned upon us; the manly hand that wrung our own in its parting agony, cannot *since* have pressed the hand of another. The change is in our infirmity of nature. We have violated a solemn pledge. We have transferred to flesh and blood, the tenderness sacred to a shade!

Such were the cumpunctious of Evelyn Saville, on first ascertaining that the young man whose visits she had fancied herself bearing with, for the sake of diversion to her children, had become an object of affection scarcely secondary to themselves!

Had Philip remained by her side, uncertainty as to the nature of his sentiments would have enabled her to combat the feeling. But as he was gone,—gone for an indefinite period,—gone perhaps never to return,—she did not refuse herself the solace of reverie, that most fatal among the many intoxications of the human heart!

The momentary interview which united them on his flying visit to Edenbourne previous to inauguration in office, had completed at a blow the mischief slowly proceeding during eighteen months. For his emotion on that occasion was not lost upon her; and she had almost flattered herself it might arise from reciprocation of those feelings which had become the dearest companions of her solitude. But on the morrow, Philip quitted the castle without so much as a word of farewell; and the fairy palace created by a moment of enchantment, in another moment wholly disappeared!

Such was the motive of her acceptance of the olive-branch soon afterwards extended by the Askhams. As the only means of obtaining news of the family, she had submitted to the intrusion of the Gwatkins and Sir Erasmus during the sojourn of Lord and Lady Askham at Weymouth; and now, satisfied that she had seen the last of him who was beginning to occupy every thought of her mind, she fancied it would comfort her to visit the scenes where his cheerless youth had worn away; and become acquainted with the brothers and sisters, among whom, perhaps, some feature or turn of expression, might serve to wake into more vivid reality the image imprinted on her heart.

There was possibly some portrait of Philip at Eden Castle,—some childish sketch, still serving to recall his altered looks. Or he might have left behind him a favourite dog; or, at all events, there was the room he had inhabited, (the elder-son apartment inherited from Percy,) containing his books, his gun, his inkstand. He had too often described it to her during the eight months of their intimacy, to leave her ignorant of a single detail.

The result gratified her expectations. In Emma Askham, she found a joyous, open-hearted girl, eager to forestal her inquiries; and even Lord and Lady Askham, to whose acquaintance she had looked with dread as the arbiters of Philip's destinies, by whose asperities his early life was made so cheerless, had too much tact not to discern the distinction of Mrs. Saville's air, and welcome so agreeable an acquaintance to their circle with a degree of courtesy that made her feel herself at home.

No reason to repent the reluctance she had overcome!—No cause to repent her introduction at Eden Castle!—And yet, in securing the means of satisfying herself concerning the health and happiness of Philip, she had completed the destruction of her own!

From the unguarded pleasantries of a girl like Emma, it was easy to ascertain the misconceptions to which her mysterious seclusion had given rise. The strangeness of Philip's deportment towards her

under the interdictions imposed by his father, was now explained. But from the elucidation, arose a dilemma, more perplexing than all the rest. Had the attachment imputed to him by his family *really* existed; and was his present estrangement the result of the peremptory prohibitions of Lord Askham?

Oh! troubled, troubled dreams, that emanated from that tormenting uncertainty!—Oh! reveries more and more enthralling, which thenceforward wrapt in Elysium her bewildered soul!—From the moment of her first ramble with Emma Askham in the shrubberies of Eden Castle, poor Evelyn became, like Othello, a victim to the

Damned moments counted o'er by one

Who doats, yet doubts,—suspects, yet strongly loves!

Even Sir Erasmus L'Estrange, the most patient of earth's tourists, who had submitted without repining to have his skin peeled off by the fervid suns of Congo, and a toe frozen from his foot by the icy grasp of Nova Zembla,—was beginning to perceive that the temperate zone of Eastfield was far less equable than of yore.

He did not tell it in Gath,—that is, he did not whisper it at Hexham Hall,—but he was sadly afraid some miasmatic influence had distempered the angelic frame of his dear Mrs. Saville!

CHAPTER IX.

Be curst and brief, no matter how witty, so it be eloquent and full of invention.

SHAKSPEARE.

Does any here know me? This is not Lear! Does Lear walk thus? speak thus? Where are his eyes? Either his notions weaken, or his discernings are lethargied.

SHAKSPEARE.

Among the mental delusions of our self-sufficient little island,—untirable in hymning pæans in its national honour as though paid to be its own poet laureat,—is the conviction that the English are the most hospitable people in the world. Not that England is the most hospitable country. The French are prone to glorify *la belle France*,—the English to glorify themselves; a Frenchman adoring his *sol natal* under some ideal emblem,—the *fleur-de-lis* or *Coq Gaulois*;—while the Englishman worships his own gross image, typified under the form of John Bull!—

There is not (we repeat it that our meaning may be unmistakeable) a greater blunder than to attribute hospitality to Great Britain; and it should be seen to in the next Useful Knowledge edition of the *Vulgar Errors* of Sir Thomas Brown.

We may have been hospitable, perchance, in the days when we had only hips, haws, and acorns to set before our guests, and wolf-

skins for their wedding garments; for our wattled cabins possessed no door for the exclusion of strangers. But the moment the Angle became a cooking animal, and above all, from the moment the patrician Englishman became a French cooking animal, and knockers and street-doors intervened between private life and the public, our sense of hospitality was as that of an eagle in its eyry!

Set not thine arms a-kembo, excellent public, (*statua gentilissima!*) nor fling back the accusation in our teeth. We deny not that thou art a mighty giver of feasts,—that thy banquets, from Lord Mayor's Day all the year round, are savoury to the palate and ponderous to the mahogany. For thou givest dinners to thy friends, as dismissal to thy servants, at a month's warning; and at Christmas time, or throughout the hunting season, as thy thousands per annum admit, fillest thy best beds with guests, and thy steward's room with the strange menials within thy gates. Thou settest thine ale abroad, taking care that thy county paper shall note the measure of its overflowing; and biddest to the rich viands of thy many courses, those who have rich viands to offer in return.

But we say again, that, as regards the genial spirit of hospitality, thou art a very churl! Thy flesh-pots simmer only for those who are ready with an equivalent; and even *they* must feed at thy own time, and the suggestion of thy good pleasure, or seek elsewhere for entertainment!

Let a guest but keep thy dinner waiting half an hour, and he will see! How much more, if he pretend to claim a meal, when thine ostentations are laid on the shelf! Thou offerest him turtle and venison in due season; but let him ask a slice of mutton of thee at his need! While affecting an openness of hospitality worthy the tents of Arabia, thou wouldst erase from thy list of friends a man capable of requesting a crust of bread and glass of Madeira, when luncheon time was past.

The Askhams, for instance, accounted hospitality among their hereditary virtues, from seeing, in the country, the hundred weights of beef and pudding crammed into their poor on state occasions, advertised in their county paper;—and in London, their weekly hecatombs, (in repayment of the daily hecatombs offered to themselves,) recorded in the “Morning Post.”

Though there was no more of the virtue that shares its bread and salt with a fellow-traveller in the desert in their frigid hearts, than in the catacombs of a metropolitan cemetery, they felt legitimately entitled, under their recent misfortune, to the sympathy of Hexham Hall and Edenbourne Lodge, by the *nachbarrecht* of mutual hospitality; and Lady Askham, who had so long repudiated Mrs. Saville as a cast-away, and who, even now, would have less resented the entrance of a burglar through one of the windows of Eden Castle than that of the gentle widow, uninvited, through the door, assumed the privilege, whenever she drove to Edenbourne, of bestowing the

weight of her tediousness upon Eastfield, if she failed in securing, at the rectory, ears for her querimonious discontent.

Never had her ladyship felt so in want of an auditory! A spring in the country was foreign to her habits, and out of her reckoning. No family connexions, now, to fill the castle with repetitions of her own mediocre feelings and features, a thousand-fold repeated. No noble aunts or sisters to join their crewels with those on her work-table, or maunder with her over the decline of India muslins and rise of mechanical lace. Even Lady Middlemore played her false: Eden Castle being too remote from town to justify a mere Easter visit to a family whose eldest son was beyond the reach of Helen's speculations; and Lady Askham, who regarded Emma as a prating child, would have been often destitute of a victim on whom to vent her vain-glory when a letter arrived from Margaret with accounts of the increasing beauty of Uppingham Manor and the infant Earl, but for the humble latch-gate among the cliffs of the Eden.

There were others at the castle, however, to whom it afforded a still more valuable resource. Young and apparently thoughtless as she was, Emma was the only member of the family alive to the influence exercised over the health of Lord Askham by his recent vexations.

The prolonged excitement of a mind unused to contrariety, was wearing the life-springs of a frame rocked during the first forty years of its existence by the monotonous ease of an unincidental life. His looks were becoming haggard, his articulation imperfect. When harassed by the details of domestic economy, which his exaggerated zeal for retrenchment brought down in judgment on his head, he was often painfully incoherent.

Unwilling to alarm her mother, Emma pointed out the change to Miss Harrison; but the governess had not an idea beyond her grammars and lexicons. She next addressed herself to the tutor, who was too much startled at being spoken to by one of the young ladies, to afford a rational answer. At length, she pretended indisposition (after the example of Percy,) to obtain an interview with Simprems; who, after hearing her details of Lord Askham's symptoms, assured her no other remedy was needful but to amuse his lordship's mind by cheerful companionship, and invigorate his lordship's frame by daily exercise.

From that day, Emma devoted herself so pertinaciously to his amusement, that Lord Askham found it impossible to throw her off.

Affecting to have imbibed the tastes of her sister Susan, she became the daily companion of his ride, or persuaded him to drive her in the pony-chaise to Edenbourne. She even permitted herself to practise on his vanity, to secure the benefit of a visit to Eastfield; by reminding him what a blessing it must be to a well-bred woman like Mrs. Saville, to be relieved by *his* society, from the burthen of that old man of the sea, Sir Erasmus L'Estrange.

It was not to gratify her own inclination, Emma Askham condescended to these manœuvres. But she knew that, at Eastfield, the weaknesses of her parents were safe from condemnation;—that the absurd confidences of Lord Askham would not be sneered at, as at Hexham Hall, or repeated from house to house, as by the gossiping Simprens. Mrs. Saville listened so mildly to his frantic ebullitions of rage, on the failure of Lord Lauderdale's mission!—Mrs. Saville consoled him so humanely, when the brilliant *début* of young Hardyng in parliament, reminded him that, for a year to come, his family borough must remain a monosyllable!—And though Emma knew, as well as if it had been told her, that this exercise of neighbourly charity was amply repaid by hearing, in return, that Philip was well and happy,—a guest at Carlton House,—or a cheerer in the gallery of the House of Commons,—she was not the less thankful for the benefit conferred. Even Selina was beginning to look forward to their daily visits, as she had formerly done to those of her dear Philip.

Lady Askham took little heed of their growing intimacy. The change produced in her husband's character by the vicissitudes of the last four years, had produced in its turn tacit estrangement between them. His violence alarmed her—his peevishness wearied;—nay, she began to misdoubt the excellence of a system which had brought forth nothing but evil.

The recent reduction of her establishment, moreover, had thrown a thousand interests into her jurisdiction, more than were dreamed of in her want of philosophy. She now knew to a guinea the value per head of laundry-maids, and cost per dozen of grooms; and what was worse, could appreciate the surliness of a second table curtailed of its wine, and the discontents of a nursery docked of its double ale. Even Miss Harrison had something to complain of on the score of abridged wax-lights!—"If Miss Susan and Miss Sophia were to practise by candle-light her ladyship must be aware that a lamp was not sufficient."

No wonder that a woman accustomed for five-and-forty years to roll through life in an easy-chair, moving on golden castors, (like the gates euphoniously revolving on golden hinges described by Milton,) should become deadened in perception by petty persecutions of this nature, to the infirmities of her liege lord and the filial devotion of his daughter.

On the other hand, the greatest annoyance experienced by poor Emma in the discharge of her adopted duties, arose from the unjust revilings of Lord Askham against the fickleness of his nephew.

"He had expected better things of Middlemore!—Middlemore had shown, in the first instance, so much heart!—Middlemore was not an ordinary young man!—He might not have taken honours in Cambridge, like his cousin Henry. He was not qualified to figure among authors and actors, like his cousin Philip. But at all events,

he had spurned the example of his cousin Percy; and accompanied Dr. Dactyl quietly back to England, instead of running his head into jeopardy by going round by Toulouse. From all which, by some strange process of logic, Lord Askham seemed to infer that it was his duty to offer his hand to his cousin Emma!—

Scarcely fair, perhaps, on the part of Miss Askham, to leave him thus disposed against his nephew; whose nature was in truth as free from the meanness of sordid calculation, as that of a Newfoundland dog. But it required some magnanimity to transfer to *herself* the blame now vented on her cousin; and Emma reconciled to her conscience her want of candour, by the certainty that, if her drives and rides with Lord Askham were harassed by perpetual objurgation, they would impart less benefit to his health.

There would come a time hereafter for the vindication of Lord Middlemore! Meanwhile, it was an act of charity to Percy, as well as to herself and Philip, to enlist another whipping-boy as a butt for the animosities of Eden Castle.

We have stated this to be Miss Askham's "worst" annoyance, because, as young ladies seldom speak truth on these points, such would probably have been her own statement. But a far *worse* "worst" was it to hear Lord Askham enumerate to Mrs. Saville, among his numerous family tribulations, the political opinions of Philip.

"Philip considers himself ill used, I am told," said he, "that I do not bring him into parliament. As if with *his* views he could ever represent a borough of mine! My son-in-law, Lord Uppingham, cannot speak of him with patience; and looks upon him as a contemptible turn-coat!"

"A turn-coat, dear papa?"—interrupted Emma, whose buoyant spirit had not adopted the habits of passive obedience she had seen so irksome to her brother and sisters. "When did Philip ever wear his coat on any other side than the present?—The utmost he can be accused of, is having failed to assume, as in duty bound, the hereditary livery of the family."

"And of having, under such circumstances, solicited office from the Tories!"—

"*Solicited* office?"—

"At all events, *accepted*."

"Surely the place he holds is wholly disconnected from politics?"—observed Mrs. Saville.

"The person who procured it for him, is not disconnected from politics!"

"The person who procured it, was his brother-in-law, Lord Uppingham,—*not* Lord Uppingham, the minister!" pleaded Miss Askham.

"A distinction without a difference!" retorted her father, with acrimony;—"mere sophistry, mere pretence. The fact is," re-

sumed his lordship, turning towards Mrs. Saville, as though Emma were unworthy to be argued with, "Philip was too cautious to embark in a sinking vessel! Philip knew what he was about. Philip foresaw that, with the death of Mr. Pitt, the good cause must founder; and took care to keep his head above water."

"I trust and believe you wrong him," expostulated Mrs. Saville. "His opinions always tended to the liberal side. Surely, my lord, he made no secret of them, from the moment he was released from the restraints of dependence?"

"Exactly!—Just what I complain of!—The moment he quitted my roof, and was able to dispense with my protection, he allied himself with the abettors of the Corsican blackguard, by whose monstrous violation of the rights of nations, his unfortunate brother has been exposed to the seductions of a sink of iniquity like Verdun!"

"I understood, insinuated Mrs. Saville, "that, by *his* interest with the present government, overtures had been made for the release or exchange of Mr. Askham!"

The indignant father's fury now burst forth.

"You *have* heard it, have you?" cried he. "The story is doubtless public! Everything connected with my family misfortunes is as notorious as if it had passed through the Court of Bankruptcy! I trust, however, madam, that those who informed you of Lord Askham's having declined a service at the hands of the present ministry, apprized you also of the ignominious channel through which it was offered?"—

"I heard only vague rumours on the subject," replied his hostess, perceiving by the embarrassed countenance of Emma, that she was apprehensive of being denounced as the informant.

"I am not like Philip!" cried Lord Askham, impetuously. "I do not incur obligations without considering the consequences they entail! Learn, madam, that the people by whose intervention my son's release was to have been effected, are a set of intriguing *parvenus*, ambitious of extending their connexions in society,—no matter at what cost,—or at whose cost. By *their* insidious manœuvres was Philip seduced from the party to which he naturally belongs. Their house, the resort of fiddlers and buffoons, has perverted his principles and weakened his understanding. Among these Hardynges, he is flattered and fawned upon, till he believes himself something and somebody; whereas the *true* object of their servility is to link themselves with his family, as a stepping-stone to their entrance into fashionable life."

"Mrs. Saville will scarcely be induced to infer from such a picture, dear papa," said Emma (with difficulty repressing her indignation,) "that Sir James Hardynges is a man of eminence, fortune, and education; about to take his seat in the House of Peers, and already of the Privy Council!"

“And what then?”—angrily interrupted Lord Askham. “It is precisely this sort of professional advancement which, by thrusting a man out of his sphere, induces him to cling, without decency or ceremony, to every object above his level, in order to secure a footing! Sir James Hardyng, or Lord Hardyng, Lord Eske Hill, or Lord Nisi Prius, or by whatever name this new law lord is to be called, would be glad enough, I fancy, to grapple his insignificance to the consequence of Lord Askham of Eden Castle, or the Marquis of Uppingham of Uppingham Manor!”

“Was not the son of Sir James a schoolfellow of the Mr. Askhams?” inquired Mrs. Saville, hoping to give time for his lordship to recover his breath, and Emma her self-possession.

“Of course he was? Sir James is just the ambitious man to send his son to Eton, with the hope of improving his connexions.”

“My *brothers* were not sent to Eton to improve their connexions,” said Emma, gathering courage from his injustice. “Why ascribe such an object to the Hardynge?”

“Because their motives are self-evident! Who and what is this Sir James Hardyng, I should like to know?”—

“One of the ablest men in the kingdom, if the judgment of our gracious sovereign is to be trusted: since he has been twice selected for an office of the highest honour and responsibility!” argued Emma in a firmer voice.

“But by *whom*, pray?—By the Whigs! who would select a chimney-sweeper to carry out their treasonable policy, if it served their ends! Sir James Hardyng is not the only man they have advanced, who has risen from the dregs of the people!”

“Surely the papers, in noticing Sir James’s preferment, stated him to be the son of a respectable clergyman?” inquired Mrs. Saville.

“The papers! Ay, no doubt, the Whig papers take care of his interests!” retorted Lord Askham. “They are paid for it. It was to be expected. It is part of their system! Defeated in their hopes of revolutionizing the country, their surest way to vilify and destroy the aristocracy, is by introducing into the Order such people as these Hardynge; who, a few years after their elevation to the peerage, are confounded by the vulgar with the ancient nobility of the realm!”

Lord Askham, whose Irish barony was a bribe of the Newcastle ministry to his grand uncle, about the middle of the last century, assumed, as he spoke, an air of as much importance as though all Magna Charta were breathing through his nostrils!

“Surely, some of our best considered peerages have been the reward of civil service?” said Mrs. Saville. “Surely it is only in France that *la noblesse de robe* is secondary to *la noblesse d’épée*?”

The proposition was hazardous; for his lordship instantly burst into execrations against a country where nobility, whether of the

first or second order had been swept from the surface of the earth. "A country," said he, "on whose heinous example the Whigs are grounding their innovations. Such fellows as this Sir James Hardyng, (Robespierres in their soul,) would fain have exterminated the whole race of that aristocracy of which, since unable to accomplish their horrible purpose, they are now licking the feet!"

"If Philip can be believed," said Emma, more shocked than frightened by his vehemence, "some portion of the aristocracy pays its court to *them*! My brother has met at Sir James Hardyng's table, many of the most distinguished members of our great Whig families,—the Dukes of Burlington, Woburn, Bulstrode."

"Of course, of course!"—cried her father. "For party purposes people will go any where, or any lengths."

"You admit then, at least, dear papa, that Sir James is a man of influence in his party?"

"So was Wilkes—so is Horne Tooke! But enough of this. Do not let me suppose, Emma, that the example of your parents has been so lost upon you, or the excellent education you have received so thrown away, as to admit of your contracting the vile opinions of your brother! It is affliction enough that two of my sons should have disgraced me. Let me not have to blush for my daughters!"

Emma herself was at that moment blushing deeply, lest her father should have formed inferences, from the warmth of her defence, concerning her clear-sightedness to the merits of the Hardynges; an apprehension considerably increased, when Lord Askham added, in his most peremptory tone, "If ever it be in my power again to reside with my family in London, not one of Philip's upstart friends shall ever cross my threshold!—He has a house of his own to entertain such incendiaries! and *mine* they shall never enter!"

To this denunciation, Miss Askham was dutiful (or prudent) enough to offer no rejoinder. A smile exchanged with Mrs. Saville, unobserved by her father, sufficed to convey her opinion that his lordship's stability in such matters, was not immutable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. That Lord Askham was now seated by the fireside at Eastfield, conveyed a consolatory hope that Robert Hardyng might, at some future day, assume *his* place beside that of Eden Castle!

She was, however, more alarmed than gratified when, only a week after this stormy conversation, Lord Askham fell fiercely on poor Simprens, for giving utterance to a faint echo of his sentiments.—It was a very mild dose of Toryism; one grain of Askham to twenty of Simprens, made up with *quantum suff.* of bread-crumb, *i. e.* the twaddle of a country apothecary in daily attendance on a valetudinarian peer. Yet Lord Askham asked him "What he meant by such illiberality? Whether, in a great country like England, merit ought not to make its way? Whether Mr. Pitt had not con-

ferred peerages on individuals of meaner origin, than those included in the recent creation!"

Uncertain whether this strange inconsistency arose from conviction, or mental infirmity, or disgust at the presumption of the pill-driver in administering his opinions as well as his senna at Eden Castle, she adhered religiously to her determination of abstaining for the future from the discussion of any subject at Eastfield, likely to discompose the soothing influence of its stagnant atmosphere.

"You are Paraclete the comforter!" whispered she to Mrs. Saville, one day, at parting. "You pour balm into the wounds of our whole family! No matter which of us gambles away his fortune or his fame; no matter how many of us set our affections on things above, or below us. Eastfield is always at hand with its vulnerary, to assuage the anguish of our contusions!"

A sigh modified the smile with which Evelyn acknowledged the compliment. She thought it hard, perhaps, that the benefit was not reciprocal; for as yet, Eden Castle had done little to remedy the wounds of its infliction!

But alas! poor Emma's projects for the tranquillization of her father's mind were easier to form than to realize. Every day, the arrival of the newspapers sufficed to re-agitate his feelings. Lord Askham's stake on the event of the pacificatory negotiations pending between England and France, was in fact too great to admit of composure; and when the moment arrived for the discharge of Percy's remaining liabilities, without bringing the smallest hope of his rescue from temptation into further excesses by release from banishment, his lordship's irritation became so alarming, that Emma took courage to communicate her fears to Philip in London, and the Marquis at Uppingham Manor.

Alas! both were so selfishly absorbed,—Lord Uppingham, in his domestic happiness,—Philip, in the complicated interests of public life,—that they were not to be startled by her evil auguries. Like Cæsar, they defied the soothsayer!

The Marquis, from whom the extent of Percy's imprudence had been carefully concealed, assured his sister-in-law, in reply, that what she took for despondency, was mere *ennui*;—that Lord Askham had merely mistaken his tastes by attempting a spring in the country;—while Philip, still more cavalierly, ascribed his father's indisposition to the reaction of political spleen.

"Do not fancy, my dear little Emma," wrote he, "that Eden Castle contains the only bilious Tory in the three kingdoms. Not a day of my life, but I descry in the window at Boodle's faces quite as elongated as you describe that of Lord Askham; and were I to hasten down to you, as you propose, I should only magnify the evil; for I could but confirm, thank Heaven, his lordship's fears, that, for some time to come, the country is safe from the yoke of his party.

“But on all accounts, a visit to Eden Castle is just now impossible. My engagements, both private and public, will detain me in town till the close of the session; when I am off with Middlemore to the Moors.

“In a week, however, Henry will be at liberty. It is Henry’s turn to make himself useful; and if you really think my father in want of one of us,—Henry is your man! For him, there are not, as for me, antecedents that render insupportable a sojourn at Edenbourne; and Lord Askham would thus secure an opportunity of examining and approving the political principles of its future representative. Write immediately to Henry, and bespeak his services for the summer.

“We had a charming *déjeuner* yesterday, at Eske Hill, including the Prince, the Duke of York, and everything most in fashion. Lord and Lady Hardynge have contrived to conciliate the great world, without affronting the little,—having made new friends by their advancement, without forsaking the old.

“I am afraid, however, that the brilliancy of their fête, yesterday, owed less to their intrinsic merits than to the patronage of the all-puissant Lady Grandison; who has taken up my friend Bob, as an eagle carries off a lambkin, and intends to marry him, they say, to the lovely Lady Anastasia. I fear, poor fellow, his head must be a little dizzy, on finding himself in so ethereal an altitude!

“Since you all left town, my dear Emma, I have enjoyed Middlemore’s society two hours out of every twenty-four; and of those twain, at least one and a half is devoted to the discussion of your charming self. I sincerely wish he loved you less, or that you liked him more; for ’tis a good beast, and very general favourite. According to Helen’s account, Hurstwood Castle is desperately besieged by the match-hunters,—a branch of the female art of war in which few have more experience than our fair cousin.

“Of the Uppinghams, I hear nothing, nor do I expect it; unless, indeed, the Gazette should have to announce that, as a reward for their domestic virtues, they have been translated to a higher sphere, and made into a constellation,—like some loving couple of pagan times.

“By the way, if you do not think it too much for my father’s nerves, let him know, my dear Emma, that one of the Bonapartes,—Louis, I think—has been ‘created’ king of Holland! One should as soon expect to hear of a ‘Prince of Lincolnshire!’ Lord Askham, however, need not object. There can scarcely be too many sovereigns in Europe to please so strenuous an advocate of crowns and sceptres!

“Of what use, however, to send messages in a letter which you inform me is to be kept a profound secret in the family? A clandestine correspondence!—Fie, Miss Emma Askham! What would

Miss Harrison say to such a breach of decorum?—I admit that it is only with a brother. But precedents (we office-men are instructed to say) are dangerous.

“Seriously, my dear child, dismiss from your mind all further uneasiness about my father! You are only abominably bored at Eden Castle, and falling fast into hypochondriacism.

Weak though I am of limb, and short of sight,
Far from a lynx, and not a giant quite,

I beg you will rely on *my* judgment rather than your own in this matter, and put your trust in the speedy recovery of Lord Askham, as well as in the good will of your affectionate brother,

“PHILIP.”

“It was scarcely to be expected that Mr. Askham should be *very* fondly attached to his parents!” observed Mrs. Saville, when Emma, with tears in her eyes, and bitter accusations on her lips, placed this flippant letter in the hands of her friend, the first time they were alone together. “He was so little cared for at Eden Castle?—He was so little favoured by Lord and Lady Askham!”—

“Philip was not a spoiled child, I admit. But his parents did their duty by him, as they have done by us all! *Our* interests have been, through life, their first object; and they have sought no other than domestic pleasures. But even were it otherwise, is a child to *calculate* its filial duty as though the mere repayment of a debt?—Dearest Mrs. Saville,—Philip is colder-hearted than a stone!”

But “dearest Mrs. Saville” would not say “Amen!” While Emma resented the cool mention of his friend Hardyng’s flirtation with Lady Anastasia Grandison, *she* had been deeply touched by the allusion to “antecedents” which rendered insupportable to him a sojourn at Edenbourne. Of late, she had begun to think those antecedents utterly forgotten; and what woman would not rather be remembered with bitterness, than wholly dismissed from recollection!

Even in the incredulity of Philip concerning his father’s indisposition, *she* saw much less to blame than the anxious daughter. Philip was leading the life of a man of the world,—stunned by the tumults of public life,—enthralled by the fascinations of private. It was easy to conceive him the *fleur-des-pois* of London,—the observed of all observers at the Eske Hill *déjeuner*,—the successful rival of young Hardyng with Lady Anastasia,—or the Satan-rebuking-sin of his coaching cousin!

After deprecating his sister’s displeasure at his levity by a thousand arguments, about as much to the purpose as the arguments of women in general respecting the object of their affections, she found herself so much in conceit with everything of the name of Askham, that, though the fretful old man from Eden Castle tried

her patience severely on the morrow, and the morrow's morrow, by wandering into her cheerful drawing-room, and sitting there for hours,—sad, silent, and surly, as though at home,—instead of resenting so provoking an interruption to her avocations, she exerted herself doubly for his amusement; then, finding him utterly unamusable, and nearly unconscious of her presence, she stationed herself in observant and pitying silence by his side.

“How glad I am he is gone at last!” cried little Edward, clapping his hands for glee, when released from the stillness imposed upon him during the long visit of their guest.

“How cross Lord Askham always looks, and how *very* tiresome he is!”—added Selina.

“Hush, hush!”—remonstrated the gentle mother, taking the little girl affectionately on her knee. “We should always be indulgent, darling, towards the failings of those we love, or even of those connected with them.—Never forget, Selina, that this cross-looking, tiresome old man, is the father of your own dear Philip.”

CHAPTER X.

Pictures like these, dear madam, to design,
Asks no firm hand, and no unerring line;
Some wandering touches, some reflected light,
Some flying stroke alone can hit them right.
For how should equal colours do the knack?
Cameleons, who could paint in white and black!

POPE.

Or stimandomi Achille, ed or Tersite.

ALFIERI.

The extenuating circumstances pleaded by Mrs. Saville in behalf of Philip's seemingly heartless letter, were not altogether suppositious. Unwilling to aggravate the fears of Emma by owning himself alarmed, still more reluctant to hazard annoying his father at such a juncture, by arriving uninvited at Eden Castle, as if to parade the triumphs of his political friends, and introduce an obstacle into the intercourse of the family with Eastfield,—while addressing his sister with studied unconcern, he had applied privately to Simprems for his professional opinion touching the condition of Lord Askham.

The position of Philip in his family was one of peculiar delicacy. The obligations he was supposed to have violated by his political defection,—the adverse confidences forced upon him by his father and brother,—and, above all, the still unscarred wounds of his days of dependence,—rendered frankness with his family impossible, even had frankness been in his nature.

From Verdun, still emanated the bitterest complaints against Eden Castle. Mr. Askham could not forgive the grudging spirit in which his difficulties had been relieved, or the austerity with which his offence was visited.

“This unfortunate affair might have been converted into an eternal tie upon my gratitude,” wrote Percy; “instead of which, my father has conferred such cruel publicity on my follies, as to extinguish all sense of obligation. So much the better! I stand relieved from a thousand scruples; and, mark my words, Philip, one day or other my family will bitterly repent their want of forbearance”—

Though unable to interpret this mysterious menace, Philip did not peruse it without uneasiness. Enough had transpired through the exchanged *détenus* concerning the habits of Verdun, to convince him that Percy, if driven to desperation, might irremediably injure his future fortunes. Yet to remonstrate with Lord Askham, or even remotely suggest the nature of his fears, would only bring down persecution on himself, and provoke one of his lordship’s unseemly paroxysms, without benefiting the cause of Percy.

It was consequently a great relief to be exonerated from all necessity for a visit to Eden Castle, by a letter from Simprems, announcing that he saw nothing alarming in the symptoms of his noble patient.

“A course of alteratives and attention to diet, will restore the epigastric functions to their pristine strength,” wrote the country apothecary. “His lordship, like other dyspeptic persons, is only a little nervous.”

Cheered by such a bulletin, without pausing to consider whether Simprems possessed sufficient skill to “minister to a mind diseased,” or even interpret its diagnostics, Philip felt entitled to eat, drink, and be sleepless, as usual, at the brilliant balls and pleasant dinner parties just then enlivening a metropolis, for whose decimation “grim-visaged War” was whetting his thousands of swords, and Miles Peter Andrews manufacturing his barrels of gunpowder.

Though the health of Fox was already such as to excite the uneasiness of his friends, his *party* closed their eyes to his precarious condition; nor was Philip so nearly connected with the former in private life, or with the latter in public, as to experience a very poignant interest in the result. Like Lord Hardynge, and other sanguine members of the liberal government, he believed the Whigs to be fixed in office, whatsoever king might reign, or whatsoever Lord of the Treasury retain the seals.

At six-and-twenty, he could not lock up his feelings, compact and hard, in a despatch-box, like Lord Uppingham, at fifty-six. *He* had not outlived the age when “cakes and ale,” and “ginger in the mouth,” have power to beguile a man out of the House of Commons even were Demosthenes himself upon his legs; and, not being

chained to the oar, like Bob Hardyng, he was able to enjoy the pleasant parties at Grandison House and other fashionable resorts, while his friend remained at his post, as became one of the janissaries of the administration.

Chiefly, at Grandison House!—Seldom had so attractive a circle enlivened the *pompes funèbres* of aristocratic life, as was collected round the handsome mother of Lady Anastasia. It could not boast of possessing, or rather, it boasted of *not* possessing, those political Gogs and Magogs—those judicial *têtes à perruque* which imparted substance to the coterie at Eske Hill; but its surface was smooth as glass, and soft as satin. No importunate buffoons,—no sturdy citizens of the republic of letters. Its literature was written on curl-papers, its politics were steeped in rose-water. To Grandison House, in short, may be traced the germ of that refined but flimsy order of society, which expanded into full luxuriance under the regency, and died a natural death with George the Fourth.

The Countess of Grandison was a woman belonging to a species which has happily no type in Great Britain. Many creeping things are indigenous among us; but such noxious insects as scorpions, tarantulas, moschetos, *cavalieri serventi*, *chevaliers d'industrie*, and *mamans galantes*, are the growth of Italy or France. A middle-aged matron so blinded by vanity as to overlook the grown-up daughter by her side, is in England a *rara avis*!

But as when a white swallow or blue spoonbill is accidentally shot, the phenomenon is sure to be proclaimed to the public by the semiscientific slipslop of some provincial paper, it behoved the Morning Post to announce in the spring of 1803, that an English-woman of high degree had returned from her travels, encrusted with gorgeous Parisianism, as a rusty key is converted into a golden one, by the process of electro-typic gilding; the homely wife and mother being obliterated by the woman of fashion.

Lady Grandison had completed her education in the finishing school of those recondite *salons* of the Faubourg St. Germain, where the *ancien régime* reconcentrated its *bon ton*, like crystallised odour of roses in a gilded flask, during the vulgarisms of the republic;—intent on proving that if its head had fortuitously escaped the guillotine, there was still, to borrow the expression of Sir Erasmus L'Estrange, “nothing in it;” and pursuing its *victoires et conquêtes* with as little principle or compunction, as the omnivictorious emperor it took the impertinent liberty of despising.

Emerging from such an academy, Lady Grandison's object, like theirs, was to come, see, and conquer. Somewhat late in life, indeed, to enter the field! But the Prince of Wales had brought full-blown beauty into fashion; and her ladyship, like the royal favourite, was “fat, fair, and forty;” nay, *very* fair, *very* fat, and *very* forty,—for, to the knowledge of many, she had remained so for the last five years! Her merit consisted in good-nature and

good-breeding;—a somewhat ærial balance against recklessness, even to the breaking of the law!

What better, however, was to be expected of a woman whose husband took less heed of her welfare, spiritual or temporal, than of the condition of the least promising of his colts entered for the Houghton or Leger? For Lord Grandison was as specifically English in his habits, as his lady was inordinately foreign;—a man only to be met with in this our great hippodrome of the civilized earth!—Lord Grandison devoted twice as many thousands a-year as had ever been in his possession, to the improvement of the breed of horses in Great Britain;—such being, if acts of parliament are to be credited, the highly patriotic purpose of our great national institution—the Turf! Yet no one would have inferred from the distinction of his air and address, that his birth as a peer of the realm, had deprived the country of an experienced horsedealer.

The marriage of the Grandisons was a made-up match,—a take in of the knowing ones. As the inmate of a ducal residence in Yorkshire during the Doncaster race-week, his lordship had been betting deep and drinking deep, though deep in no other particular;—when lo! one morning at breakfast, he was assailed on all sides with congratulations by the party staying in the house, on having been accepted, the preceding night, after his third bottle of claret, by the lovely Lady Anastasia Treby. Too gentlemanly a man and staunch a sportsman, to appeal to Grandison sober from Grandison when in his claret cups, the match came off; and Lord Grandison, who had remembered nothing of the proposal, soon seemed to remember as little of the marriage.

The new countess took care not to remind him. It would really have been a shame. For so long as he remained oblivious, Lord Grandison was the happiest of (sporting) men,—at Melton all the winter,—at Epsom, Ascot, Egham, Doncaster, York, Tattersall's Milton's, wherever men and horses are gathered together throughout the remainder of the year:—while his lady followed,—in London or Brighton,—Paris or Rome,—the fashion and her own devices:—whereas, had the happy couple been compelled to run in harness together, an upset was inevitable.

With the decent regularity of domestic life, such a *ménage* must always be at issue; and Lady Grandison, who, like the other light substance called amber, had the faculty of attracting straws, lived surrounded by admirers; to whom the world, ever apter to conceive the existence of vice than folly,—assigned a harsher name. But the world outshot its mark. Through life, her ladyship had been absorbed by a single and engrossing passion,—Lady Grandison alone having possession of the tender heart of Lady Grandison. Adoring her own sweet face and lovely form, she encouraged a crowd of fashionable fops, only as an attestation to the public that her attachment was not misplaced.

It was a startling thing to a woman of this description, who had been pretty so long that she knew not how to leave it off, to find the little daughter, so long a plaything at her feet, shot up to the intrusive growth of seventeen years, and claiming her lawful share of admiration. Lady Grandison, who by her recent sojourn in France had grown fifteen years younger, could not stand the test of such a rivalry. Dear Stasy must be married off out of the way;—well, if possible, at all events married;—and her mother prepared for the achievement, with the sort of fussiness certain to defeat its object.

Nothing, however, could exceed her ladyship's surprise on finding, at the close of the third season, her daughter still established in permanent rivalry at her side! Nobody could guess why. It would have been difficult to point out a prettier or more pleasing person than Lady Anastasia; or, according to *her* insight into the duties of life, a more amiable. She was fondly attached to the Countess, who, though desirous of her early establishment, was an indulgent mother and good-humoured companion; testifying her love for "dear Stasy" at twenty, much as she had done for "dear Stasy" at two, by gifts of toys and gewgaws, and bewildering her with a double allotment of the pastimes of life.

But if Lady Grandison felt deeply mortified that her daughter should remain her satellite, instead of shining as the planet of another sphere,—society was the gainer. The flirting chaperon being determined to have her opera-box to herself, the fêtes of Grandison House became every day more brilliant; and the Countess more eager for popularity and assiduous to please. It did not occur to her that she was *too* popular and pleasing for a mother-in-law; or that the young men of the day might be accustomed to hear her spoken of in terms fatal to the interests of her daughter.

Meanwhile, if her influence in society failed to marry Lady Anastasia, it availed for almost every other purpose. If it be true, that "A King's face gives grace," the countenance of Lady Grandison was almost equally potential. Her bow was a fiat of fashion; and as a momentary gleam of sunshine unfolds the blossoms of the *mesembrianthemum*, a passing smile from her ladyship sufficed to confer beauty and bloom.

Her caprices became the caprices of the town. On her arrival from Paris, attired in a tunic and zone,—a Raman matron in all but decency and virtue, May Fair soon swarmed with Cornelias and Agrippinas, *manquées*, like herself; and as it was part of her system, on marking out some happy man as a desirable match for Lady Anastasia, to *talk up* the class or clique to which he belonged, and *prôner* his style of dress or person till no other was tolerated, no end to the gusts and disgusts into which the world of fashion had been betrayed by its aptitude in copying Lady Grandison!

While flattering herself, for instance, that Hurstwood Castle and

its coaching lord were waiting for her daughter to seize the reins, the full effulgence of her ladyship's patronage was poured on the barouche club; and the cubbishness of Lord Middlemore was thenceforward cited as manly spirit, till box coats became your only wear.

Sir Henry Lenitive, the puny offspring of Lord Askham's Torquay dowager, succeeded to all the honours; and so long as there was hope of securing his slender person and overgrown fortune, Grandison House was never without pectoral lozenges on its table. A new hall-stove raised the temperature of the house to fever heat; and in its *menu*, chicken-broth sufficed *pour tout potage*. An eighth deadly sin had been discovered by Lady Grandison in the vulgarity of robust health!—

The fine arts had next their turn of favour, in deference to a *cognoscente* Marquis; till the fortunes of Phillips and Christie were raised cent. per cent., by the throng of fashionable fools that followed the Grandisons to their auctions, to bid for pictures they did not want, and statues they did not understand.

Science and the Royal Institution followed; in conjunction with the young Duke of Norcliffe; who was undergoing a course of *douches* of knowledge under the keepership of Dr. Dactyl (whose stock of learning seemed undiminished by the transfer of any portion of it to Lord Middlemore or his cousin Percy)! But when it became apparent that his grace's eyes were absorbed during the lecture by the experiments of Sir Humphrey Davy, or closed in a ducal doze, and that all Lady Anastasia and her train of imitators gained by the loss of an hour a day in a close lecture-room, was the headache, she fell back upon duncehood in good earnest; protesting (because Sir Robert De Lacy was wild for private theatricals, and a *parti*) that all the world was a stage, and that all the men and women of fashion *ought* to be “merely players.”

Soon after the elopement of Sir Robert with the *soubrette* of a minor theatre, who had won his affections by prompting him in the part of Tony Lumpkin (which he was murdering for the benefit of a public charity to which it would have been as easy for the baronet to contribute the two hundred pounds realized by his self-exposure), Philip Askham having made his appearance in the London world, with the reputation of being heir presumptive to a peerage and thirty thousand a year, *vu* the precarious state of an elder brother far gone in a decline, was immediately marked down by Lady Grandison.

Now, Philip was a man of a thousand; that is, a man undistinguishable by any peculiar *cachet* from the thousand idlers of fashionable life; so that her ladyship, having in *his* instance no crotchet or mania to conciliate, for once condescended to be *herself*!

She could scarcely be a better thing, in the estimation of the frivolous class of whose suffrage she was ambitious. Grace and liveliness of no common order imparted a charm not only to the showy

fêtes of which she and Lady Anastasia were the life and soul; but to the well-composed society frequenting the well-furnished, well-lighted, well-ventilated apartments of Grandison House. For, by never pretending to be better than well, every thing pertaining to Lady Grandison was excellent. Exonerated by her high position from the vulgarity of exorbitant refinement, or lion-feeding, or any other mode of "unparalleled attraction," there was perfect harmony and unison between herself, her guests, and the means provided for their entertainment.

The Grandisons were Whigs (in that one particular, in deference to his vote in the House of Peers, let us include his lordship in the family!) not from conviction, — not even by inheritance; — but simply because liberal opinions were the fashion. The court of the aged sovereign being in decadence, the political principles of the heir-apparent were courtieresquely adopted, in common with the cut of his coat and habits of his household, by those who, having no ideas of their own, are fond of aping the highest in the land; and all the Graces, as well as all the talents being with the Whigs, Lady Grandison was not far off.

It was, perhaps, on this account that, on perceiving that Philip Askham was more disposed to listen to Lady Grandison than talk to Lady Grandison's daughter, — or perhaps after ascertaining that the health of Percy had been improved though his morals were injured, by a residence abroad, — the Countess became suddenly bitten by the rage of politics.

For what were dukes and marquises, — consumptive baronets or stage-struck lordlings, — compared with the greatness of one whose mission might be made to comprehend the mastership of the public mind, and grand-mastership of the destinies of Europe; — a self-created Colossus, a heaven born minister, without any "mortal mixture of earth's mould," — a hazard-proof Fox, — a Pitt who could weather the storm without fear of shipwreck in *port*. — In a word, Robert Hardyng had made his bow at Grandison House! —

That the only son of the future chancellor of the future sovereign, would prove a most satisfactory substitute for the impracticable Philip, soon became apparent. On this hint, Lady Grandison condescended to solicit the acquaintance of Eske Hill. On this hint, unaccustomed as she was to private proying, she invited the new Lord and Lady Hardyng to her house; and (apparently measuring their tastes by the solemnity of his lordship's wig), gathered together in their honour all the potent, grave, and reverend signors she could think of, as conferring dulness on the House of Lords or profundity on the British Museum!

Lord Hardyng, the pleasantest of companions and most buoyant of human beings, having always heard Grandison House described as the resort of every thing that was light in fashionable levity, scarcely knew what to make of so cogitative an assemblage. For

a moment, he almost hoped the men in buckram might throw off their disguise at some appointed moment of the feast, and appear in their appropriate suits of harlequinade. Such antics had often been played in his own merry-making establishment, by an amusing knot of his associates connected with the management of Drury Lane Theatre. But, alas? they did these things differently at Grandison House!

Nor was the Countess more judicious in her management of Bob, than in catering for the entertainment of his parents. Bob Hardyng was what is called a rising young man,—clever and ambitious,—his confidence in his own powers equalling his desire of distinction. Now, Lady Grandison, convinced by her one-sided logic that an object must be the same, by whatever means accomplished, conceived that, since all he ambitioned was the attainment of social distinction, it would be pleasanter to reach the apex of the pyramid at a single step, as the son-in-law of the high priestess of fashion, than to attain it by his own slow efforts like a Curran, a Sheridan, or a Horner. No occasion, therefore, was left unimproved of vaunting the high antiquity and alliances of the House of Grandison—the favour she enjoyed at Carlton House—and the personal influence and popularity, which rendered even that favour unimportant. Nay, she almost expressed in words, (so clear was the inference,) that the husband of a Lady Anastasia Grandison would be able to dispense with the paltry dignity of a law barony; and might be spared the trouble of speechifying himself into notice, by breaking stones upon the beaten track of the House of Commons.

To have his motives laid bare, or rather to have ignoble motives unjustly imputed to him, was not likely to subdue a heart, whose aspirings rose far above the standard of fashionable notoriety; and whose desires were unfathomable by the or-moulu gauging-stick of a right honourable patroness of Almack's.

But on discerning the impertinent calculations of Lady Grandison, instead of allowing himself to be piqued into the loss of a charming acquaintance, he coquetted with her negotiations, as Talleyrand was doing with those of Lord Lauderdale: so as to enjoy to the utmost her ladyship's brilliant parties, capital dinners, comfortable opera box, and shady villa, on the strength of matrimonial intentions which had never entered his head.—*A trompeur, trompeur et demi!*—Lady Grandison was, for once, out-Machiavelized. In dealing with a worldly woman, men are apt to lay their consciences on the shelf!

He entertained no fear that his attentions might create an impression on the heart of the lovely Lady Anastasia,—having good reason to suspect that her affections were placed elsewhere; and considered the smiles she deigned to lavish on him amply repaid by his assiduity in increasing her cortège on those public occasions

of shawl-fetching and carriage-calling, which enable the fashionable Sultana to humiliate, by the extent of her guard of honour, the pride of some rival queen.

The coterie of Grandison House, meanwhile, was sorely puzzled to decide whether Hardynges or his friend Philip Askham were the favoured adorer. When two young men are constantly seen together, like "the kings of Brentford smelling at one posy,"—driving in the same phaeton, or lounging neck and neck along Constitution Hill,—people take it for granted that they are as fairly matched in capacity, as the pair of horses in their harness.

That Johnson had his Bozzy, or Queen Anne her Duchess of Marlborough, or that a seeming level unites the majestic lion with the puppy dog in his cage,—inspires no mistrust of the intimacies arising from schoolboy chumship, or the propinquities of official life.

Yet the connexion between Hardynges and Askham was purely adventitious. No natural affinity united them, no real confidence. The ruling passion of either (of Philip, for a woman who despised him,—of Bob for one whose family paid him the same compliment,) was fated to remain a secret to the other. Their very characters were uncongenial:—Askham delighting in still water,—Hardynges in the running stream;—the delight of the former in purple and fine linen being derived from the gratification of his epidermis;—of the latter, from its influence on the vulgar eye.

The head and heart of the young *parvenu* were at once of finer texture, and improved by higher cultivation, than those of his companion. In Bob Hardynges, there was the making of a great man. Twenty to one but the efforts of nature to that effect, might be defeated by the force of circumstances. Between the metal bubbling in the furnace, and the round, puissant, and polished statue it has been fused to create, the chances of casting intervene; and few in number are the "mute inglorious Miltons" commiserated by Gray, compared with those who, after indications of a Milton's genius and power, are dwarfed by some sinister influence, or overpowered by contemporaneous competition. In these days of universal education, the germs of hundreds of Chathams are developed, for one that comes to perfection!

No one was more sensible of this than Robert Hardynges. He was aware, too, that he had fallen upon days when the ablest combinations of the statesman had no chance against the *coup de main* of the hero. He had heard the voice of parliament oppose a public funeral for Pitt; and beheld a weeping population follow spontaneously the remains of Nelson. By such schoolings, the presumptuous aspirations of his boyhood were held in check. Instead of lying crushed under his ambition, like the Maccabee under his elephant, he kept the monster firmly in subjection; pretending only to that federative or fractional glory, which suffices the desires of the wise.

Even the most infinitesimal dose of fame, however, is not to be attained without working for. To say so much as “ay” or “no” appropriately in the House, demands the most assiduous application. But the son of Lord Hardyng had every encouragement to diligence, in the honours his fathers had achieved, and the happiness he trusted to attain; and to render himself worthier the favour of his sovereign and smiles of Emma Askham, poor Bob was content to slave all day as a practical public man, and all night as a deliberative.

Of such materials, how was a woman like Lady Grandison to create, by the magic of a few sweet words and smiles, a puppet to be set up among the Dresden shepherdesses and Chinese bonzes, adorning her ladyship’s boudoir!

“Commend me to the coolness,” said Hardyng to his friend Philip,—(as they were discharging their duty to the country by lounging together in a window seat of their office, overlooking the Thames,—“commend me to the coolness with which our friend at Grandison House appropriates the faculties of the most eminent men of the day to her ridiculous purposes,—like some armourer arranging in whimsical devices the deadly weapons under his charge!—But let her look to herself! Dear Stasy may chance to cut her fingers among so many implements of destruction; which, though betrophied for the nonce into a fan or a sun-flower, retain their power of life and death.”

Philip responded to this lengthy illustration by a provoking laugh. He could not quite forgive his friend the *sang-froid* with which he had obtained and retained his footing in a spot where “angels feared to tread.”

“Since when have you thought yourself so dangerous?” said he, still holding his sides.

“Αἰδώς οὐκ ἔγχεθῃ! Away with your false modesty!” cried Hardyng, unabashed.

“‘Envy doth merit like its shade pursue;’ and *you* and others are kind enough to afford me a shadow, fully authenticating my substance.”

“You would not be quite so saucy,” retorted Philip, in the same tone of *persiflage*, “if you had accompanied the Grandisons last night to Carlton House. There was a certain rich man—”

He paused: but Bob Hardyng was not to “gagged by a mystery.”

“A certain rich man *at Carlton House*?” cried he. “Did they sit him down to whist, or piquet? For French hazard, I conclude, the house is not licensed?”—

“There was a certain rich man,” resumed Philip in continuation, “in honour of whose acres in Sussex, Lady Grandison has already assumed the advocacy of the landed interests.—She hunted poor Windham, last night, into a corner, and favoured him with her

diamond edition of theories on poor laws, land-tax, and corn, till I was afraid he might be pestered into dealing with her as summarily as with some twaddler of the opposition benches."

"And who is the rustic knight she has taken under her protection?"—inquired Bob, amused that Philip should so little understand his feelings towards the Grandisons.

"I think the clodhopper was called *de* something or other; but he has a princely place somewhere on the borders of Sussex."

"My friend Sir Hugh de Bayhurst, for a thousand!" cried Hardyng. "Surely you must have often seen him speaking to my father?"

"I see many people talking to Lord Hardyng, of whom I know nothing."

"Ay, 'people' who are mere 'populace' in the estimation of Eden Castle! But Bayhurst is a name that might have been familiar to its castleship's august ears, any time since the first crusade,—if there were *then* Askhams in the land! It was I that introduced the 'clodhopper' to Lady Grandison, and bespoke her civilities. But perhaps you know him better as Sir Hugh Saville?—The family changed its name for an estate, in the time of William and Mary; and the present baronet has just obtained the royal sanction to resume it.—Quite right!—I hate the name of Saville!—Its historical associations are far from flattering!"

Philip Askham answered not a word. He was absorbed in reflecting, *not* upon his friend's antipathy to the name of Saville; but on his own indiscretion in accepting overtures of acquaintanceship from a man of whose antecedents he knew nothing. But who could have conjectured that this Sussex baronet with the lofty title, was no other than the "cruel uncle" of little Selina?

In spite of his pretended ignorance of the "Sir Hugh de something or other," Philip had become sufficiently familiar with Lady Grandison's protégé, to feel thoroughly uncomfortable at the discovery. The introduction had occurred some days before at a water-party, ending in one of those scrambling Richmond dinners, to which mammas of the Grandison order have recourse, towards the close of the season, when all other matrimonial ambushes have failed; and they had been thrown together too familiarly, and renewed their acquaintanceship too speedily at Carlton House, to admit of future disavowal.

Already, a thousand wild surmises were passing through the flustered mind of Philip. Aware of Lord Askham's residence in the neighbourhood of Edenbourne, Sir Hugh had perhaps sought his acquaintance for the purpose of obtaining an insight into the habits and pursuits of his banished sister-in-law; or, sharing the general impression that Philip was a first favourite with Lady Anastasia Grandison, might intend, by a sudden allusion to Eastfield, to denounce in *her* presence the pre-engaged affections of his rival!

Overlooking, in the perplexity of the moment, the Cuyp-hunting visit to Mansfield Street, which, while exercising so potent an influence over the feelings of Hardyng, had rendered him cognizant of the existence of Selina, he pursued, with assumed *nonchalance* his inquiries respecting Sir Hugh de Bayhurst.

“Do you dine to-morrow at Grandison House?” said he. “If so, you will meet this old friend with a new name.”

“I am not asked. With the Irish question before the House, Lady Grandison knows it would be an empty compliment.”

“We shall have a member or two, however, besides Sir Hugh de Bayhurst.”

“Members *à foison*,—for the division will be a late one.—I have to *speak*!—Of Sir Hugh de Bayhurst I see enough elsewhere, to dispense with meeting him at Lady Grandison’s.”

“Do you happen to know whether he has any brothers?” demanded Philip, abruptly, fixing his eyes on the river below, as searchingly as if fishing for whitebait.

“None now surviving. There was one, I fancy, in the army, who died during the father’s lifetime. I never saw Ned Saville; but my mother describes him as the handsomest and most charming fellow in the world.”

“Sir Hugh is a handsome man,” observed Philip, with a short cough.

“Handsome, but not charming. Edward, they say, was worth a dozen of him. He was with the Guards in that unlucky Dutch expedition, and distinguished himself at Valenciennes.”

“And was it there he met with his death?”—

“He died of a decline, when I was at Christchurch. Poor fellow!—he had made a foolish match!”

The eyes of Philip were now following the course of the river, as if to decipher the name of a wherry passing under the last arch of Westminster Bridge, while carelessly adding, “A *love match*,—of course!”—

“Desperately so, I presume; for it was in the face of the fiercest family prohibition. Old Sir Herbert swore he would never give him another guinea, and kept his word.”

“What you call a decline, therefore, was perhaps starvation?”

“More likely a broken heart! The girl had something, on which they lived, or, as you wisely observe, starved. But he was obliged to sell out of the Guards, poor fellow! and a man never gets over being forced out of his position in life. In little more than a year, there was an end of him. He left a little girl,—and, unless I am mistaken, another was born after his death.”

“The family, then, were reconciled to the widow?”

“Not that I ever heard of!—Strange, if they were,—considering that the match was the cause of poor Edward’s banishment.”

“His wife was perhaps a woman of disreputable character?”—added Philip, with a slight renewal of his cough.

“Horrible! a very monster of iniquity!”—

Philip Askham’s blood ran cold in his veins.

“The daughter of some half-pay colonel, with a fortune of five thousand pounds!—What can you desire *worse* for your second son?—Though blameless in every other particular, I quite agree in the anathema of Sir Herbert Saville! However, as poor Ned was fated to die young, it did not much signify; and by this time, I dare say they have all forgotten his name.”

“The easier to be accomplished, since they have changed their own,” said Philip, more cheerfully, as if a load were taken off his breast. “Thank you for initiating me into the family history. Sir Hugh being fated to make *la pluie et le beau temps* at Grandison House for the remainder of the season, it is as well to be on one’s guard. When shooting in the dark, one is sure to hurt a man’s feelings by some random shaft.”

“Which is the greatest bore in the world!” rejoined Bob Hardyng, starting up to take his departure from the office, on catching the distant signal of the postman’s bell; very little surmising the smart which, during the last quarter of an hour, *his* random arrows had been inflicting on the susceptible bosom of his friend!—

CHAPTER X.

My apprehensions come in crowds,
I dread the rustling of the grass;
The very shadows of the clouds
Have power to shake me as I pass.
I question all, and do not find
One that will answer to my mind.

WORDSWORTH.

Solemque suum, sua sidera norunt.

VIRGIL.

Pre-occupied in mind by his growing ambitions, as in heart by the bright image of the lovely sister of Philip Askham, Hardyng had heard with unconcern that he was superseded, as absent without leave, in the favour of Lady Grandison. But, on reflection, he became curious to ascertain whether, in *his* case as in Philip’s, she would enlist, as an advantageous dangler for herself, the man on whom she no longer entertained designs for Anastasia.

“Lady Grandison has so much tact,” argued he with himself, “and is so thorough a proficient in the wisdom of what calls itself the world, that she may serve as a fashionometer to determine not

only *my* value, but my father's, in the appreciation of the sworn appraisers of the *beau monde*."

He was careful, therefore, not to absent himself from the *conversazione* held the following Sunday evening at Grandison House. For the Countess, among other Parisian importations, had established a weekly At-home, that rivalled the popularity of the Royal-Terrace-mob at Windsor Castle; nor was her sporting lord more assiduous in his devotions every Sabbath morning at Tattersall's, than were, every Sabbath night, under his roof, the friends, adorers, and disciples of his lady.

On the present occasion, Hardyng entered those brilliant portals with less than the gladsome anticipations they were wont to inspire. He had been dining with his father, whom he left deeply depressed by the illness of one whom he loved as a man as much as he revered as a minister; and having been cautioned by Lord Hardyng against uttering a word at Grandison House confirmative of the flying reports of Fox's indisposition, the clouds upon his face were naturally attributed by the idlers of the set to jealousy of the distinction suddenly transferred to Sir Hugh de Bayhurst.

"Devilish good-looking fellow, this new man,—isn't he, Hardyng?" whispered Lord Middlemore, whom his sister Helen had with some difficulty pressed into her service as chaperon, (the dowager having scruples about attending Sunday parties, with which, in her daughter's case, she found it convenient to dispense,—as though Helen were not arrived at a time of life to be rigidly righteous!)

"Handsome, certainly!" interposed Miss Middlemore, hoping to engage the attention of Hardyng;—"but his countenance is far from prepossessing. Whatever Lady Anastasia may think of him, he is not to be spoken of in the same day with my cousin Philip," added she, trusting that, at some future time, Hardyng might report her generous panegyric to his friend.

"Phil is ten years younger, to begin with!" cried her brother; "and Phil has been in better training, and shows cleverer paces. But De Bayhurst is a fine figure of a man, for all that!"

"A fine figure of a *yeoman*!" replied Hardyng, slightly. "He makes a splendid exhibition at the head of his Bayhurst volunteers."

"What! is *he* the fellow who raised that cavalry regiment in Sussex, after whose uniform the Prince is said to have altered the regimentals of the Tenth?"—exclaimed Lord Middlemore. "By George! then he is something, after all!"—

"Could you not infer as much," said his sister, with a significant smile, "from the attentions bestowed on him by Lady Grandison?"

"I never make my book on Lady Grandison's information!" retorted he. "'Ware false warrantry and forged pedigrees!—Lady

G. is apt to get bad intelligence. Why she wasted nearly as much time on Phil Askham, as would have netted a duke, only because I hummed her into the belief that he was as good as an eldest son!"

Hardynge could not altogether repress a contemptuous glance towards the coaching cousin, who pretended to be *more* than a cousin, to his divine Emma.

"Your lordship's intelligence may have had due weight with Lady Grandison," said he; "but the favour bestowed by Lady Anastasia on my friend Philip would, I am certain, be unchanged, whether he were heir to Hurstwood Castle or son to a Welsh curate."

"Bravo, bravo, Mr. Hardynge!" cried Miss Middlemore, eager to establish, for her own sake, the disinterestedness of young-lady-kind.

Yet when Sir Hugh de Bayhurst approached them, a moment afterwards, she became spasmodically affected by those galvanic influences too often exercised by single men of large fortune over single women of moderate; agitating her eyes and fan, as if no longer mistress of herself in presence of a *parti* great enough to be booked by Lady Grandison.

Yet of her manœuvres, the saturnine Sussex baronet saw no more than if they had been enacted by the invisible girl!—

"I was in hopes of meeting Lord Hardynge here to-night," was his mode of accosting Bob, "in disproof of the sad news I heard last night at the opera from Mr. Askham, concerning the health of Mr. Fox."

"My family are old-fashioned people," replied Bob, evading the dangerous part of the question. "To *them*, parties must appear to be hard work, for they class them with Sabbath-breaking!—Even at Paris, they refrained.—But where is Askham? I do not see him here to-night."

"You see plain enough that he is *not* here!" cried Lord Middlemore, with a laugh; "and what's more, I bet a pony that he is not coming. Dear Stasy is looking so deucedly down in the mouth!"

"To *me*, Lady Anastasia looks, as she ever does, all loveliness!" observed Hardynge, more disposed than the coaching peer to favour the sentiments and pretensions of his successor in Lady Grandison's man-trap.

"Deuced civil of you to say so!" rejoined his lordship; "for, by George, she has looked our way, and been guilty of three great yawns, since you came into the room!"

"Which you attribute to my having ventured hither, unescorted by my Pylades?"—replied Hardynge, with good-humoured irony.

"I know nothing about *Pylades*," retorted the cubbish lord; "but I'm certain she'd see the whole room of us flung into the Serpentine, to save Philip's dog from drowning!"

"I trust my cousin may arrive, later in the evening," observed

Miss Middlemore, in her blindest tones—to encourage Sir Hugh into asking for an introduction, “for I have a message for him from mamma.”

“What! has the old lady a dinner on the stocks?” demanded her brother. “If so, I owe it to Philip to put him on his guard. My mother’s dinners are what no man should be tempted to risk, who has a young family unprovided for. All dowager dinners ought to be labelled ‘poison’ by act of parliament.”

“My message regards nothing so pleasant as a dinner-party,” observed Helen, turning a stone-deaf ear to his impertinence. “Mamma desired me to tell him,—and Mr. Hardyng, who is certain to see him, will perhaps undertake the commission,—that she had a letter yesterday from Eden Castle, and that my aunt is seriously alarmed about the health of Lord Askham.”

“The deuce she is!” interrupted the unsilenceable Lord Middlemore. “If the old gentleman were to slip off the hooks, I can tell you, it would be a famous bad thing for the family. Nine younger children, and Percy as fast in the stocks as Bony and a Whig ministry can make him!”

Hardyng was proceeding to make further inquiries respecting the state of Lord Askham, (though, of the nine younger children, his Pylades was certainly not the first object of his solicitude,) when Lady Grandison, a little fidgetty at seeing Sir Hugh de Bayhurst linger so long beside a handsome girl like Helen Middlemore, made her way towards the group. She was sufficiently versed in her calling, however, to render her purpose inostensible, by addressing herself first to Mr. Hardyng.

“Did you see poor Mr. Askham before he set off?”—said she, in a plausible tone of sympathy, which elicited only a look of blank wonder in return. “I received his note of excuse just as we were sitting down to dinner,”—added her ladyship; “and if, by the mercy of providence, Lord Grandison had not invited Sir Harry Sweepstakes this morning at Tattersall’s, we should have been literally thirteen at table! However, dear Stasy (who cannot bear to see me annoyed) would probably have insisted on dining in her own room. Luckily, that fifteenth man of Lord Grandison’s saved us!”

“But what possible excuse had Askham for exposing your ladyship to such a hazard?” inquired Hardyng, perceiving by a side-glance that her purpose was fulfilled, De Bayhurst having already stolen off towards Lady Anastasia, whose side she had designedly left unguarded.

“Is it possible that you have not heard?” said his hostess, with suitable gravity of countenance. “Mr. Askham has been sent for express to Eden Castle!—Poor Lord Askham is not expected to live!—Poor Lord Askham has had a paralytic stroke!”

The first impulse of Hardyng was to turn towards the Middle-

mores. But they were already out of hearing; the wary Helen having drawn off her brother in pursuit of the handsome Baronet, on pretence of paying her compliments to Lady Anastasia.

"I am deeply concerned to hear it. I knew nothing of the matter. I shall probably find a letter from Askham on my return home," said he, addressing Lady Grandison.

"It is very provoking!" she replied. "For I had counted up Mr. Askham for our Greenwich dinner, next week; and I fear he will be detained some time in the country."

Then, perceiving, by the reflection in an opposite glass, that her end was accomplished, and apprehensive of being detained by Hardyng with a long discussion of Lord Askham's condition, she exclaimed, as she prepared to move off, "Most likely we shall not see him again this season! In the absence of his elder brother, the charge of the family will of course devolve on your friend."

The deep sigh with which Bob responded to the observation, was naturally attributed by Lady Grandison to sympathy in Philip's impending cares; for how was she to surmise that the new member, who was supposed to be chin-deep in the hot-mud bath of politics, was lamenting only that this change in the administration of the Askham family would effect nothing in advancement of his projects; the brother of Emma Askham being the avowed advocate of her coaching cousin.

Far from satisfactory, meanwhile, were the reflections of Philip, on his hurried journey towards Wales, accompanied by Sir Henry Halford, (then known under the modest name of Dr. Vaughan,) whom he had been charged to convey with the utmost speed to Eden Castle. Though the affections of Philip had been painfully estranged from his parents by the austerity of their early discipline, he trembled at the possibility that his neglect of Emma's warning might be the origin of the recent catastrophe. He felt completely in the wrong. He ought to have known, by long experience, that Simprems was an ass. He ought to have trusted to his sister!

To the reproaches of his own conscience, moreover, would shortly be added the recriminations of the Uppinghams,—the sententious admonitions of his brother Henry,—the accusations of the whole neighbourhood! If Lord Askham's attack should prove fatal, it was *himself* rather than the guilty Percy, who would be taxed with parricide!

Under such apprehensions, he proceeded to cross-question his learned fellow-traveller, concerning the nature, progress, and results of paralytic attacks, with a circumstantiality that would have done honour to an Oxford professor, or the College of Physicians. But the fashionable physician, who knew no more of the constitution or habits of the noble patient concerning whom he was required to prognosticate, than could be learned by occasionally meeting him on the stairs when in attendance on the nursery in Mansfield Street,

was cautious not to commit himself in reply. The account forwarded by Simprens stated the attack to be slight; that indited by Miss Harrison under Lady Askham's directions, afforded little hope that they should find him alive; and the London physician, with suitable contempt of the judgment of a country apothecary, was consequently inclined to anticipate the worst.

But Philip would not despair. Philip did his best to believe that his father was in no sort of danger,—that his inertness had done no harm,—that the family were unnecessarily alarmed. The idea of a long sojourn at Eden Castle was sufficiently disagreeable to him to redouble his interest in poor Lord Askham's condition; and already he had determined, if circumstances afforded a decent pretext for returning to town, to insist upon the duties of his office, and hasten back with Dr. Vaughan. Collision with the neighbours would be too annoying!—Why discompose his temper by the sight of Sir Erasmus L'Estrange,—or his feelings by a visit to Eastfield?—

The lapse of a summer night and day spent on the journey, soothed by a purer atmosphere as well as by the fair landscapes passing rapidly before his eyes, served to promote a happier frame of mind.—Twelve months had passed since he beheld the country face to face; the real, right-earnest country of wood smoke, barley-bread, and sunburnt faces,—golden plains and forest-clothed acclivities; (so different from the meretricious suburban region of villas and lawnlets,—picnics and water parties!) and its noble horizon, its sweeping woodlands, and majestic parks, served at once to ennoble his feelings and dignify in his estimation his own position and the hereditary endowments of his family.

To be an estated peer of such a land as lay before him, afforded indeed grounds for assumption!—In Philip, as in others, the struggle of London life had produced a considerable abatement of self-esteem. But the old leaven was rising again; and the sight of corn-fields and forests reminded him with welcome flattery of the vast disproportion being the *menu fretin* of professional life, and such magnates of the land as the Askhams of Eden Castle. The life or death of a man possessing such a stake in the country as his father, proprietor of a borough, patron of fifteen livings, and commanding a rent-roll of thirty thousand a year, *was* a matter of moment!—

Nothing doubting that, on this point, the borough aforesaid coincided with himself, Philip, recalling to mind his last triumphal entry with his family into Edenbourne, prepared himself, as they approached the little town, to interpret its mournful physiognomy as trustworthily indicative of the progress of events at the castle. As the carriage rattled through the market-place, he gazed earnestly from the window; hoping to greet some well-known face, on the look out for his arrival, whose expression would forewarn him at a glance.

But alas! no eye responded to his own! With the exception of a group of ragged boys playing at hopscotch in the summer dust, who set up a shout derisive rather than complimentary as the vehicle effaced their boundaries, not a soul was visible in the street. The brass-plate on the door of Simprens shone bright and glaring as usual; and the acacia trees in full bloom in the vicarage garden, were as fair and pleasant to look on, as though no sickness of greater consequence than the workhouse fever, prevailed within twenty miles round. Unapprized of his coming, Edenbourne had prepared no parade of sympathy in token of allegiance.

On reaching the toll-bar from whence the shrubbery-belt of Eastfield was discernible, Philip carefully averted his head; but at the point of the road sacred to his own and Percy's unfilial apostrophes, he fixed his eyes wistfully on the façade of the grand old family mansion it brought in view, trusting that its aspect might afford surer auguries than that of the ungrateful borough. On this occasion, though more than ever justifying the epithet, he forbore to salute it as a "dreary pile!"

But if the arrival of the travellers were unlooked for at Edenbourne, at the Castle they were expected with breathless anxiety. Without pausing to interrogate the old servants awaiting them with grave faces on the threshold, Philip proceeded at once to usher his companion into the sick chamber; where Simprens stole forward on tiptoe to greet them with details of his noble patient far from satisfactory, and details of the remedies he had applied, satisfactory only to himself.

While Dr. Vaughan betook himself to the bedside, to examine the pulse and countenance of the sufferer, Philip withdrew hastily to the window. He had not courage to witness an investigation that might end in a sentence of death.

Sentences of death, however, are seldom orally administered by the life-preserver of a court. After a silence of many minutes, during which all was so still in the muffled chamber that Philip could hear the ticking of the doctor's chronometer, Dr. Vaughan approached the window with noiseless footsteps and well-schooled solemnity of countenance, silently conveying the fatal decree with due deference to the rank and fortune of the sufferer.

"My father's state, then, is hopeless?" murmured Philip, forestalling the afflicting communication.

"Hopeless, as regards the restoration of his faculties," replied the oracle, in the proper sick chamber whisper. "As regards the mere functions of life, Lord Askham may survive for weeks, for months, perhaps for years. But he will drag on a miserable existence, lost to himself and family.—I regret to say that his lordship's mind is irrecoverably gone."

Philip had not breath to inquire whether preventative measures, adopted in time, might have averted the evil. At the impulse of

his startled feelings, he was already beside the bed of his father, contemplating the vacant stare and distorted countenance of the unfortunate man thus prematurely effaced from the list of responsible beings. It was impossible to blind himself to the fact, that paternal affliction had done the deed!

As an aggrieved father, the situation of Lord Askham, deplorable as it was, became invested with a sort of dignity; and while the complicated causes of the mischief recurred to the mind of his son, Philip could scarcely refrain from exclaiming, as he pondered upon the fatal influence of Percy's indiscretions,—“What on earth took him round by Toulouse?”

The involuntary reminiscence, however, was out of place; for

Γελως ακαιρω εν βροτοις δεινον κακον.

and the heart of Philip was sincerely touched by the solemnity of the scene.

To the rest of the family, meanwhile, the decree of Warwick Lane, rapidly promulgated through the house, conveyed considerable relief. The weeping school-room and panic-struck servants' hall dwelt only upon the fact that his lordship's life might be spared for years.—No matter his state of imbecility,—no matter his being bed-ridden!—Any thing rather than the grave:—

The weariest and most loathed worldly life
Is paradise to what we fear of death!

and, as the lady's maid whined consolingly to Lady Askham, while administering a copious draught of camphor julep after the professional decree, “Her ladyship had no need to take on, for while there was life there was hope!”

If Philip saw little cause for gratulation in his father's helpless state, for a lesser mercy he was sincerely thankful. Not a syllable was uttered by the kind and judicious Emma, when he folded her in his arms, in allusion to her neglected warnings. Though her hollow eyes and wasted cheeks avouched the anxieties she had undergone, she adverted only to the future. Of what avail to aggravate their present misery by allusions to the past!

All she entreated was that Philip would not think of leaving them. Dr. Vaughan had been forced to return immediately to town. But, though Lord and Lady Uppingham, who had been sent for, were expected in the course of the day, it was impossible to dispense with Philip.

“It is to you we all look for instructions,” said she. “My poor mother is too much overpowered to act; and during Percy's absence, to *you* belongs the supreme authority here.”

HE,—Philip the drudge,—Philip the condemned younger son, invested with supreme authority at Eden Castle!—There was mockery in the very idea. But no! all was sad and sober earnest.

The tyranny of the place was overpast. THERE lay before him, extended on the bed from which he was never more to rise, the proud man humbled—the angry man subdued—the selfish man, dependent for the remainder of his maimed and disabled existence, on the mercy and sympathy of other people. Already, Lord Askham, of Eden Castle, was as any other mortal clod!—

Poor Simprems who, during the brief sojourn of the courtly Esculapius, had crept about the place with drooping ears and tail between his legs, hazarded a slight attempt after his departure to renew his former twaddle about “fortifying the epigastric region by alteratives and a change of diet.”

But he might have spared his pains. Lord Uppingham was now arrived; who, fixing his eagle-glance on the confused apothecary, made it apparent by a few authoritative questions and comments, that half the evil was the result of his incompetency; and that all he could do in atonement, was to attend strictly to the suggestions of a judgment sounder than his own.

For the Marquis was come, as usual, to advise and govern, not merely to deplore. Though deeply touched by the self-accusing tears of his beloved Margaret as she surveyed the altered form of her helpless father, his predominant concern was lest the welfare of his lordship’s equally helpless family should thenceforward lie at the mercy of the unstable and selfish Philip; and remembering the state of subjection to which he had seen his brother-in-law reduced by the former oppressions of Eden Castle, he rashly attempted with *him* the same course of stern cross-examination to which he had submitted the apothecary.

But Pope Sixtus had long since flung away his staff; and stood upright in the conclave. The Marquis might as well have attempted to bend the mainmast of the Victory, as bully the new and improved edition of Philip Askham. Forewarned and forearmed against one who claimed over him the superiorities of a benefactor, he encountered his dictatorial brother-in-law with an impassible dignity of reserve, such as would have made the fortune of his diplomatic career.

There was every excuse, however, for the anxieties of Lord Uppingham. Still ignorant of the details of Percy’s rash improvidence, he knew not what to make of the reduced establishment at Eden Castle, so different from his own princely household, and its former methodical array; and, dreading that Lord Askham’s seizure might have been produced by the pressure of pecuniary difficulties, and the family of his precious Margaret be on the brink of ruin, there was no one but Philip to whom he could apply for information.

His own poor little wife, spell-bound the moment she crossed the threshold of her former prison, was devoting all her thoughts and moments to her mother; and as to Lady Askham, *her* faculties seemed

scarcely less impaired than those of her lord! After living five-and-twenty years with one who was bone of her bone, and flesh of her flesh, by the law of nature as well as by sacramental grace, she felt herself so completely identified with him, that, since it was proved in his case that paralysis was in the blood, she felt convinced her own turn was coming; and having communicated her fears to Simprems, so anxious was he to make amends for former lack of zeal, that already he had prepared for cupping, and talked of sinapisms to the feet.

Deprived of his usual companion by all this ill-timed folly, and finding it as impossible to extract information from Philip as from his unconscious father-in-law, the Marquis of Uppingham went wandering about the desolate place, sorely in want of some one over whom to exercise his ascendancy, (an operation which *he* called taking into his confidence!) and great was the relief to his feelings when Henry Askham made his appearance from Cambridge,—to enter into his grievances, and assume a place behind him on the opposition benches.

Henry Askham, a cleverish but priggish young gentleman, still dizzy on the stilts of his university honours, and inflated with ambitions generated by the discovery that a family borough was keeping warm for him in the oven, was overjoyed to receive overtures of friendship from one of whom he had hitherto regarded Philip as the exclusive *protégé*; and whom he venerated as a Tory and borough-holder far more than as a marquis or a brother-in-law. A league offensive and defensive was speedily entered into between them; on the grounds of many national alliances, that, being devoid singly of power or information, and two negatives being supposed to make an affirmative, their weakness and ignorance united, might produce enlightenment and strength.

In every numerous family where diversities of interest prevail, parties are as certain to arise, as in the body politic of the state. Before three days were over its head and that of Lord Uppingham, Eden castle was irreconcilably divided against itself. The vidual seclusion of Lady Askham's chamber afforded a gathering point for the malcontents; while Emma, who had been thrown out of her mother's good graces by her coldness towards Lord Middlemore and friendship for Mrs. Saville, remained the solitary ally of Philip; in common with whom, she devoted herself to the care of the invalid.

"I can understand *my* being in their black books," said Philip, as they sat together at the dressing-room window adjoining Lord Askham's room, enjoying the dewy twilight of a sultry July day, while discussing the family politics; "but what have *you* done, dear Emma, to offend them? *You* have neglected no duty towards your parents,—*you* do not dine at Carlton House,—*you* are not the friend of Lady Grandison——"

“But I am the friend of Mrs. Saville!” interrupted Emma;—“a far less pardonable offence!”

“I fancied,” replied Philip, lowering his voice, though they were alone, and the ears of the sick man in the adjoining room would have remained insensible to a park of artillery,—“I fancied that she had of late become a favourite here?”

“Yes, so long as you remained in London.”

“Why, what influence have *I* in the question;—I, who have neither seen nor thought of her for years.”

“You will see her often enough *now*: unless, indeed, Lord Uppingham should instigate mamma to a new declaration of war.”

“Lord Uppingham?”—reiterated Philip, with some *hauteur*, “I should not advise *him* to interfere.”

“I have heard papa assert, a thousand times, that it was only to break off your intimacy at Eastfield, my brother-in-law applied for your appointment.”

Indignant to find that he had been dealt with as a puppet, Philip expressed in stronger terms than ever, his determination to rebut all future intermeddling on the part of the Marquis.

“If Lord Uppingham *often* exhibit as much defect of sagacity as in anticipating danger to *me* from a passion for Mrs. Saville,” said he with bitterness, “it strikes me that his reputation as a public man, must be somewhat usurped!”

“Perhaps the danger he apprehends, lies in Mrs. Saville’s passion for *yourself*?”—remonstrated Miss Askham.

“Her passion for *me*?”—cried Philip, with a gesture of impatience.—“How can you utter such absurdities?—I could forgive Margaret, who never had an idea—unless suggested by Miss Harrison, and is now enslaved by her husband’s opinions. But you, Emma, who are more observant, and have had opportunities of judging the case, *you* know the indifference with which I was always regarded at Eastfield!”—

“*Always* is a wide word!” replied his sister, smiling at his vehemence. “I suppose, however, there *was* a time when you visited there as a mere acquaintance.”

“Certainly! and *since* that time, I have not visited there at all.”

“Absence is no great security against the growth of an attachment!” rejoined Miss Askham, with a sigh that seemed to bear some personal reference;—“and as regards Evelyn’s affection for *yourself*—”

“Emma!”—interrupted her brother, with deep emotion,—“you are choosing a strange moment and a strange subject, to practise upon my feelings!—On such points I never distressed *you*!—From the moment you convinced me of your antipathy to Middlemore, I refrained from mentioning his name!”

“You are not, I trust, so ungrateful,” said Miss Askham, with spirit, “as to compare *my* contempt of that foolish fellow with *your*

feelings towards Mrs. Saville?—I wonder whether all men endeavour to excuse the levity of their hearts, by pretending to disbelieve in the attachment of which they are the object!”

“Do you persist, then, in asserting me to be regarded at Eastfield as more than a common acquaintance?”

“As an object of *adoration*!”—replied Emma, “I can solemnly assure you that little Selina”—

“*Selina*!” interrupted Philip, half frantic with disappointment. “Just now, you seemed to be alluding to Mrs. Saville!”

“And so I was! What but her attachment to your ungracious self, has kept her still a widow?”

“Her attachment to the memory of her husband!—Had you seen her as *I* did, in her first broken-hearted days of widowhood—”

“Hearts tender enough to be broken by such losses,” interrupted Emma, “are tender enough to love again. But you exact too much in requiring me to explain the why, when, and wherefore of her affection. All I know is, that it sufficed to prevent her forming a most advantageous marriage.”

“Do you call a match with Sir Erasmus L'Estrange a most advantageous marriage?”

“Had poor Simprems been in sufficient favour with you to venture upon gossip, you would not be still ignorant that, after the ball here last year, my poor father's protégé, Sir Henry Lenitive, who was staying at Eden Castle, placed his splendid fortune at her feet.”

“A man far gone in a consumption!”

“Helen Middlemore assured us *that* was a recommendation in the eyes of your fine lady friend, Lady Grandison!”

“But who told you, my dear Emma, that he had been refused by Mrs. Saville?”

“Himself!—Half mad with disappointment, he confided to me, as the friend of Evelyn, that, in order to set the matter at rest for ever, she admitted her affections to be engaged.”

“But not to *me*?—She never said they were engaged to *me*?—cried Philip, gasping for breath.

“Urge me no further on the subject,” replied his sister. “I cannot say more without violating the confidence of Mrs. Saville. But where are you going, Philip?”—cried she, perceiving that he had started up, and was looking for his hat and gloves.

“Merely to take a turn in the park. I have scarcely been out to-day; and the evening air is so refreshing!” replied her brother, about to quit the room.

“Stay a moment, and let me fetch my bonnet to accompany you,” cried Miss Askham, alarmed by the impetuosity of his movements.

“One of us must remain here to make a report by-and-by to Simprems,” said Philip, evidently resolved that it should not be himself.

“*You* have been with my father the greater part of the day, and can give the most detailed account of him.”

And away he hurried; leaving Emma to muse over his selfishness;—for, as he truly asserted, she *had* spent the greater part of the day in the sick-room.

Nevertheless, when Simprens made his appearance, she was forced to admit that Philip must have been indeed in want of air and exercise; for it appeared that he had gone in pursuit of them, literally as far as Edenbourne!

After the discharge of his professional duties, the gossiping apothecary could not refrain from mentioning that he “had not expected to find Mr. Philip at home, having met him about an hour before on the high road, within a stone’s throw of Eastfield.”

At that moment, Emma agreed with all the world except the turnpike-man, that it was strange her brother should prefer a dusty high road in the dog-days, to the fragrant shrubberies of Eden Castle!—

CHAPTER XII.

In a house full of children, you shall see the eldest respected, and the youngest made wantons: but in the midst some that are as it were forgotten, who, many times prove the best.

BACON.

Satis magnum alter alteri theatrum sumus.

EPIC.

In the course of the ensuing three weeks, the London journals more than once informed the public, (doubtless profoundly interested in the event,) that “the state of Lord Askham’s health was such as to afford to his medical attendants and afflicted family, no hope of his recovery;” and for a wonder, the London journals spoke truth. A second consultation of physicians had decided that his lordship’s mind was utterly gone, and his body soon to follow.

A considerable change had occurred, however, in the prospects and politics of the family. The Uppingshams had returned to the North,—Margaret being of opinion that a helpless infant had stronger claims on her maternal care than a helpless father, on her filial; and previous to their departure, Lady Askham, as if arming herself against all opposition, by the support of her son-in-law, summoned into her sick chamber the members of the family council.

In the capacity of her attorney-general, the Marquis opened the proceedings; and though, in any other, the deep feeling with which he adverted to the calamity of his noble contemporary, and exhorted all present to make the comfort and credit of the head of the family their first object, would have excited as strong an interest in the mind of Philip, as the loyal burst of Lord Thurlow, in the case

of his afflicted sovereign, had done in that of the whole kingdom,—yet, viewing him in the light of a benefactor aspiring to become an oppressor,—or of a Tory out-of-place, seeking to assume the reins of government wherever they were hanging loose, Philip Askham hardened his heart. Having now ascertained that the service rendered him by Lord Uppingham was the result of a cold-blooded desire to part him from the woman to whom he was supposed to be attached, all tie of gratitude was at an end.

“Were it likely,” said the Marquis, at the close of his exordium, “that the life of poor Lord Askham would be of long continuance, it would be necessary to apply to Chancery to appoint a curator of his person and estates. But the annoyance and publicity of such a proceeding may be spared. His medical attendants are unanimous in opinion that his days are drawing to a close; and Lady Askham is competent, under such circumstances, to execute all minor acts in his name. By the deed of William, first Lord Askham, a sum not exceeding five thousand a year, was fortunately set aside out of the estates, for the express maintenance of Eden Castle; to be enjoyed by the head of the family for the time being, or such members of it as he shall appoint, on condition of residing there six months in the year;—a provision which forestalls all necessity for judicial interference.”

“*Quand l'orgueil donne des conseils,*” says Helvétius, “*l'orgueil les fait repousser : l'enclume fait rebondir le marteau.*” The authoritative tone assumed by Lord Uppingham would have rendered unpalatable the wisdom of Solomon; and though the clause to which he referred had been kept a secret by Lord and Lady Askham only to make a virtue of their enforced adherence to home, Philip chose to make his brother-in-law accountable for their hypocrisy.—It was not to *him*,—unkindred with the Askham blood,—that the mystery should have been first entrusted; and on his proceeding to lay down the law, in his usual decisive tone, concerning the treatment to be adopted towards the invalid, Philip lifted up his voice to intimate, in a tone equally overbearing, that “it was his intention to be solely guided by professional advice.”

“I am merely signifying the pleasure of Lady Askham,” was the stern reply of the Marquis. “Your mother’s authority, Philip, is still paramount here.”

“And I, my lord, am maintaining the rights of my brother Percy,” rejoined Philip, with firmness; “of whom, during his absence from England, I am the representative.”

“You are mistaken, sir; his parents are his natural representatives,” rejoined Lord Uppingham, with increasing *hauteur*.

“His *natural* representatives,” retorted Philip, “but not his *legal* ones!” And having laid upon the table a power of attorney, formally executed by Percy, investing him with the fullest powers,

he had the satisfaction of seeing a glance of dismay exchanged between his mother and her dictatorial son-in-law.

“ You have lost no time ! said the latter, refolding the parchment after examining the signature, and ascertaining that it was of a week’s date. “ But, with such legal advisers as Lord Hardyng, and such couriers as a secretary of state, all difficulties of time and place are easy to overcome ! ”

“ It was your lordship’s suggestion on your arrival here that active steps ought to be taken,” rejoined Philip, with an air of defiance : “ and I have received from Lord Hardyng, as a *friend*, only such counsels as *you* have been seeking in behalf of others, from the professional advisers of my father.”

Had Lord Uppingham at that moment provoked him by further sarcasm, Philip might have been tempted, perhaps, to produce the letter by which the transmission of the power of attorney was accompanied ; in which Percy, after the bitterest invectives against the officious counsellor who had induced his father to withdraw his name from the list of prisoners selected for exchange, so as to excite specifically against him the animosity of the Emperor, and render impossible all future negotiations in his favour, appealed forcibly to his brother, as his steady friend,—his only real friend in the family,—to adopt his interests as his own, and repudiate all interference in his concerns, in the event of his father’s decease.

“ It may perhaps suit the projects of one who has spent his life on the back-stairs, and among the intrigues of the court,” added Percy, “ to prolong my banishment for life, as, thanks to the universal triumphs of the French army, will probably be the case. But, by Jove, *he* shall not profit by my loss !—On *you*, my dear Phil, I can wholly depend. *You* are my representative at Eden Castle ; and I adjure you to be on your guard against the craft of those whose wits have been rendered sharper than ours only by longer contact with the hard whetstone of the world.”

But the Marquis of Uppingham was too high-bred and self-possessed a man to provoke useless altercation. Sufficiently versed in human physiognomy to see that Philip was armed with the strength of his obstinate selfishness, as well as with an efficient power of attorney, he foresaw clearly, on quitting Eden Castle, that his first visit would be his last. Having recommended the interests of Lady Askham to her son Henry, (in confidential terms, which so tickled the young man’s vanity, that for the remainder of the day he stalked about the castle, mysterious and consequential as Malvolio,) he turned his face joyfully toward that happier home ; where for *him* the best joys of life were commencing, while of Lord Askham, though his junior, the mortal race was run !

Meanwhile the secret of Philip’s assumption of consequence soon transpired in the neighbourhood, as was plainly to be inferred from the deferential tone of Simprems’s application to him for instruc-

tions, and Dr. Hacket's for tidings of his noble father, interlarded with scriptural texts, as became a note addressed to the patron of fifteen livings. But what was far more satisfactory, whenever either of them *now* descried him walking towards Eastfield, he took care to have immediate business in the opposite direction; or was so lost in reverie, as to pass him by unobservantly on the other side. But this was not the greatest wonder accomplished by the sovereignty of Philip. If the rector and apothecary were struck blind, Lady Askham was miraculously restored to health! Her nervous panic subsided under the shock of a real grievance.

Had Lord Askham died a sudden death, his cousin-wife,—his companion of a quarter of a century,—would doubtless have experienced the sentiments of affliction becoming her widow's weeds.—But his mode of attack and present condition, excited terror rather than pity.—She had scarcely courage to look upon her second self, disfigured and idiotized; and was in the position of the horror-struck victim chained by Mezentius to a corpse.

As usual when the fine sensibilities of the heart are blunted, meaner feelings found room to expand. Touched on the tender point of her interests, she discovered that she had no leisure to cultivate symptoms of a flying palsy; that, to protect the seven younger children still unprovided for, against the encroachments of Philip, she must be vigilant as Argus. For though, had her ladyship been *compelled* to reside at Eden Castle, she would have complained of the insufficiency of the means assigned to keep up the place, and the hardship of being tethered to a spot connected with reminiscences of her earlier and happier, days,—no sooner was it clear that, on Percy's attainment of title and fortune, she must be reduced to the insignificance of dowagerhood, and dismissed from her olden home, than she began to feel herself ill-used!

Never till now had she been duly sensible of the beauties of Eden Castle, or the merits of her country neighbours! When glancing from her dressing-room windows towards the unsightly outline of Hexham Hall, which stood regarding her with neighbourly compassion from the opposite hill, she admitted with a sigh, that there could not be a more friendly woman than Mrs. Gwatkin, or a more harmless old gentleman than Sir Erasmus: then, as her eyes descended from the Hexham chimney-tops to the verdant glade of the home-park, an exclamation burst from her lips, resembling in humble prose the apostrophe of Milton's hero,—

“And must I *leave* thee, PARADISE!”

Hard, indeed, to find her career of domestic prosperity cut short, full twenty years before the allotted age of man—or nobleman!

Such sentiments as those of Lady Askham it may be necessary to describe at length, for they were sentiments proper to Lady Askham. But in the confident hope of possessing among our readers fifty

young, generous, and tender souls for every selfish dowager, it appears less urgent to relate that the paradise *she* was preparing to lose, was already gained by others better qualified to do it honour. The sympathy of the attentive reader cannot but have forestalled the announcement, that, from the first evening of Emma's revelations, the road through Eden Chase had resumed its former attractions in the eyes of Philip; and strange to relate, though his visits to Easfield were now daily repeated and daily prolonged, not a soul had a word to say in reprobation!

Mrs. Saville had become as much an object of respect in the neighbourhood, as she had always been of admiration. Her pleasing manners, and sterling virtues, had won golden opinions for her on every side. Aware of her having forborne to monopolize the splendid fortune of the devoted Sir Erasmus, Mrs. Gwatkin revered her as the friend of her family; while the rector, aware how large a portion of her narrow income and bespoken time was devoted to charitable purposes, respected her as the friend of the poor: nay, the passion of Lord Askham's son, which, so long as she passed for an adventuress, had doubled her opprobrium, centupled her merits now that she had progressed into an angel!

The saint in crape was twice a saint in lawn!

But what mattered, at that moment, either to Philip or herself, how she was talked of, or what degree of sympathy their courtship was exciting?—So happy were they in themselves, so happy with the exuberant happiness of an attachment long thwarted by interference and long harassed by misunderstandings, that the livelong summer day would not have sufficed for mutual explanations and protestations, even had the day been wholly at their disposal. But alas! how limited a fraction of it could be snatched by Philip from his painful duties at Eden Castle!

After all, though five years had elapsed since their accidental encounter, their probation had not extended to a *very* advanced period of life! Mrs. Saville was scarcely three-and-twenty; and the calm seclusion of her recent life having counteracted the effects of early care and early maternity, she retained the almost girlish air imparted by extreme fairness of complexion and slenderness of form.—Philip Askham was justified in exclaiming, under the fascination of the beaming smiles no longer withheld from him, that among the daughters of fashion as among the dowdies of Eden-bourne, not one was comparable in beauty with his future wife.

Under the delicate circumstance of the family at Eden Castle, their engagement was for the present kept a secret; their union being postponed till Philip should be released from attendance on his father.—*Whom* had they to consult?—*Whose* displeasure had either of them to deprecate? Philip wisely foresaw that rejected by her nearest connexions, Mrs. Saville would become wholly

dependent on his will. And how pleasant it was, now that their fears and perplexities were at an end, to go over, step by step, and hour by hour, the past, so pregnant with vexation; to account mutually for their long blindness and gradual enlightenment to the nature of their sentiments,—the sleepless nights,—the repining days,—produced by the alternations of hope and fear symptomatic of unhappy love!

When mirth was wanting to relieve the oppression of their overcharged hearts, it was easy to find amusement in the absurd jealousy conceived by Philip of the nankin-coloured Romeo of Edenbourne Lodge. Nay, when the fillip of a lover's quarrel seemed desirable, there was good ground for a mimic war, in the widely-bruited flirtations of Philip Askham with the young beauty of Grandison House.

But no such stimulants were necessary. The sands in the hour-glass of the lovers were all of gold. Impossible to be happier whether in themselves or each other. Eastfield was at that season of the year a bower of roses; and now that Philip experienced no nervous vertigo to attribute to their fragrance, he admitted the little nook to be indeed the "Garden of Eden,"—especially since the old serpent, Sir Erasmus, was crawling in the sun elsewhere.

Next to the peaceful-hearted woman who sat hand-in-hand with Philip, enjoying the summer atmosphere and letting the pleasant hours go by, the happiest person at Eastfield was Selina! As the day-and-night companion of her mother, the child instinctively imbibed her attachments; and having no remembrance of the father lost in infancy to qualify her affection for one who petted her so kindly, and whose personal fascinations were so considerable, the little girl welcomed him back with as rapturous a joy, as though aware of the heartfelt delight experienced by her mother in his return.

Little Edward, a year younger than herself, and endoweth with twice her animation and half her sensibility,—content to be amused, no matter by whom, and noisy no matter where,—still preferred the lodge, the pony, the terrier and Sir Erasmus, to the long explanations and silence, almost equally prolonged,—between the daily visitor and mamma. But Selina, skipping about the lawn at Eastfield like the guardian fairy of the place, was no obstacle to the confidences between the happy pair; and so truly did the little creature enjoy the company of her dear Philip, (even when he had no attention to bestow on herself, as was not usually the case,) that she would loiter for hours beside the garden-gate, listening for his coming footsteps;—a post of observation, which, but for the shame of detection, Mrs. Saville might have been occasionally tempted to share.

The happiness of the loving couple in each other was perhaps all the greater, that they had no confidants on whom to expend the expression of their joy. Sole survivor of her own family, and disavowed of her husband's, Evelyn Saville had none but her

children to divide her affection with Philip; while he, restrained by the fear of creating family discussions from allowing Emma more than a guess at the origin of his auspicious change of humour and mysterious absences from the castle, and prevented by the intimacy between the Hardynges and De Bayhurst from confiding his altered prospects to his friend, was all in all to *her* whose future life was to be all his own.

From Bob, indeed, he received frequent letters, on pretence that, in the melancholy seclusion to which he was condemned, news of the London circles might be acceptable; but, in reality, because it was easy to insinuate into every epistle some ridiculous anecdote of Lord Middlemore. Nor was his account of his own engagements and pursuits framed with a view to *depreciate* himself in the eyes of Emma; to whom he took care to despatch such long and intricate messages, as, with a person so indolent and averse to explanations as Philip, insured that the whole letter would eventually be placed in her hands.

Graver subjects, however, than the bets and boobyism of Lord Middlemore, or the coquettings of Lady Anastasia Grandison, soon occupied his pen. To Philip, he made no secret of the precarious situation both of Fox and the Whig administration; and the depression of his father under this double cloud occasionally communicated itself even to his buoyant spirits.

But though Philip fulfilled Bob Hardynges's unexpressed purpose by the regular communication of his news to Emma, (perhaps as some atonement for his reserve on other matters,) he carefully avoided in reply all allusion to the happy events which rendered Grandison House, and the Middlemores, and all the other shreds and patches of London fashion, altogether vanity in his sight.

Cheered, on the other hand, by the political prospects so unsatisfactory to Philip and his friend, Henry Askham, the embryo man of genius, was already off to the north, to confederate with Lord Uppingham touching their mutual prospects, in the event of a change of ministry.

The state of his mother was no longer such as to require his support, nor of his father his assistance. Lady Askham was absorbed in gathering together her household pelf, that she might be prepared for immediate departure from the castle, "in case of the worst;" and though poor Lord Askham had recovered sufficient strength to be wheeled into an adjoining chamber for change of air, he was incapable of distinguishing between the attendance of his sons and that of his servants.

Emma, indeed, untirable in her assiduities, often spent hours by his side; protesting that he was aware of her presence, and had several times made efforts to address her—But that this was *impossible*, Simprems proceeded to demonstrate by all the rules of art; and by dint of much obstinacy and much Latin, he succeeded in

convincing Lady Askham, that his noble patient was as morally and physically dead, as though the marble tablet were affixed in form over his lordship's sepulchre, and her ladyship's weeds already rusty.

What therefore was the surprise, almost the dismay, of Philip, when, one afternoon, as he was inditing a letter to Verdun, acquainting Percy with the progress of events at Eden Castle, he was hurriedly summoned by the nurse in attendance on his father. "My lord had recognized her,—my lord had spoken, almost distinctly,—my lord had asked for my lady!"

If the grave had given up its dead, he could not have been more startled; and it was difficult to subdue his amazement into a more becoming sentiment, when, on entering the chamber where, propped in his easy chair, sat Lord Askham, still gaunt and ghastly, but conscious of all that was passing around him,—his affectionate greetings were answered by a fixed stare of some moments' duration; at the close of which, he marked his recognition of his son by faintly articulating the name of "Philip."

The delighted Emma was addressed with tenderer recognition; and from the few words to which he gave utterance, it was clear that his impressions remained at the point where they were arrested by his paralytic seizure. He not only called for the favourite dog by which, on that occasion, he was accompanied, but in his incoherent words to his daughter, alluded kindly to Mrs. Saville!

Marvellous to relate, the person who, it might have been supposed, would experience the greatest triumph in this resuscitation, seemed far from overjoyed.

Lady Askham, panic-struck by his attack, was panic-struck by his recovery!—Had Edward Saville suddenly made his appearance at Eastfield, he could scarcely have produced greater consternation, than poor Lord Askham, the despot of Eden Castle, by suddenly, after six weeks abeyance of his faculties, venturing to "ask for my lady!"

For my lady was conscious of having sinned against him!—My lady had unceremoniously ransacked his private papers in search of a will, and invaded his secret sanctuaries, to hunt for title-deeds. Many of his letters were destroyed,—many of his treasures demolished,—many of his plans rendered abortive. But it was all the fault of Simprems!—Had not Simprems assured her, in the most positive manner, that the mind of Lord Askham was as irreparably gone as though he had been dead a twelvemonth, she should have been more careful in her proceedings,—*anglice*, more scrupulous in her spoliations!—She made her appearance, in short, in presence of the dead-alive, as though summoned before the quarter-sessions.

That day was a day of stupid wonderment at Eden Castle!—Philip, not venturing to be a moment out of call of his father, so far

from enjoying his usual expedition to Edenbourne, could not find a moment to despatch an explanatory line to Mrs. Saville; and when Simprens made his appearance in his turn, so overpowered was he by the unlooked-for reversal of his sentence of death, that, with his usual precipitation of judgment, he fell into a contrary extreme; hinted that a miracle had been accomplished, (perhaps in requital of the prayers of the most virtuous of wives!) and, after feeling the pulse of his patient, protested that nature having operated so great a crisis, there was no reason why, in some days' time, Lord Askham might not be refreshed by carriage exercise! In a few weeks, God willing, (and the healing art permitting,) all might be at Eden Castle as heretofore.

In the course of the day, this marvellous intelligence was communicated by letter from Emma to Uppingham Manor,—from Philip to the lady of his love,—and from Lady Askham to her man of business. The very newspapers were instructed to acquaint the world with Lord Askham's miraculous recovery.—Death and the doctor were distanced!

But the result of such shallow and short-sighted hopes is easy to anticipate. The expiring lamp had brightened only at the moment of extinction; and Mrs. Saville was awoke next morning, after a night of feverish restlessness, by a strangely lugubrious sound,—the great bell of Edenbourne tolling the knell of Lord Askham!—

Sad omen!—that her first intimation of the event securing her marriage, should be a passing bell!—Sadder still, that when, two months afterwards, on the removal of the widow and family from the castle to Mansfield Street, her wedding really took place, the parish church was gloomy as night with the funeral altar and pulpit-cloths of its deceased patron;—the very pew-opener exhibiting a suit of sables!

Nay more,—as the carriage conveying the newly-married couple entered the quadrangle of Eden Castle, the first object that met the eyes of the bride, on raising her head from the shoulder of her husband to salute the scene of her future happiness, was the achievement of Lord Askham recently fixed over the gateway, with its emblazoned mockery of skulls and cross-bones!—

“IN COELO QUIES!” involuntarily repeated the gentle bride of Philip Askham, as, with a swelling heart, she crossed the threshold of her future home!

CHAPTER XIII.

Cælum quid quærimus ultra?

LUC.

A second hiccupped, "Our old master's dead,
You'd better ask my mistress who's his heir."

"Our mistress!" quoth a third; "our *mistress*?—Pooh!

You mean our *master*, not the old, but new!"

BYRON.

The first step taken by Philip Askham on the decease of his father, was to resign his appointment. Not because the probability of a change of ministry on the death of Fox, suggested scruples of conscience,—for its duties were unconnected with politics; but because, he felt it impossible to dissolve too speedily the bond of obligation that bound him to Lord Uppingham.

The fortune bequeathed him by his father amounted to little more than five thousand pounds, and his present noble income was precarious.—Still, while the Red Book contained his name inscribed by the hands of the Tories, he did not seem to breathe the breath of independence.—By the renunciation of a salary of eight hundred a year, he found himself all the richer; as a ship lightens itself in a storm by flinging overboard some precious freight.

It was well that his measures were so promptly taken;—for on the dissolution of parliament by the Whigs, a few weeks afterwards, he was able with a better grace to throw down a gauntlet of defiance to the head of the family. Armed with the authority of the new Lord Askham, whose political opinions were liberal as his own, he signified the impossibility of assigning to his brother Henry the representation of Edenbourne.

"Since Lord Uppingham was so eager for his return to parliament, his lordship could not do better than qualify him for some Tory seat. But Edenbourne was bespoken."

The little borough was of course a little surprised, and scarcely knew what it should make of itself as the advocate of liberal principles; having worn the Askham colours and opinions so long, as almost to fancy them its own. Even the consolation of finding its new-fangled arguments crammed into its mouth by the hand of the present representative of the family, was denied!—

Philip Askham steadily declined all entreaties that he would take its representation on himself. He had abjured London. His beloved Evelyn had no connexions there to necessitate her involvement in its perilous vortex; and though the allowance of five thousand a year, entailed by the former Lord Askham and secured to

him by the present, would enable him to keep up Eden Castle according to the intentions of the testator, it would afford no surplus for the expenses of a London establishment. He requested the Edenbournians, therefore, to accept his best thanks and excuses, and the Honourable Robert Hardyng in his stead.

By this strong measure, the breach between himself and the family was complete; and the disgust with which the Marquis of Up-
pingham beheld the borough he considered *quasi* his own, given over to the most heinous Whiggery, was not greater than the contempt with which Henry apostrophised his brother's want of political ambition, and denounced his political apostacy; or the surprise expressed by the Middlemores, and still more loudly by his fashionable connexions, at his pitiful design of retiring from the gay world to rusticate in the once despised obscurity of Eden Castle. Not one of them understood what he was about!

He was *about* the happiest of created beings! Eden Castle, in spite of the achievement over its gates, was no longer the "dreary pile" of other days. The penitentiary system was at an end. The household bonds that governed it were of silk, instead of iron. A beaming spring replaced the pallid, humid, sunless, hopeless autumn which constituted the atmosphere of its olden time.

Young and active servants officiated in place of the superannuated ones who had grown old, cold, and idle, under the rule of their late masters. A morning-room was relieved from its antique furniture, and the grim ancestral faces on its walls, to be enlivened by light-some hangings,—companionable books,—and the musical instruments formerly banished, as in disgrace, to a chilly music-room; while on the southern lawn under its windows, extended a well-designed flower-garden, promising to rival, at some future time, the delicious fragrance of Eastfield.

To effect these transformations had been a pleasant task to Philip. As sometimes occurs in higher walks of government, the viceroy proved more efficient than a reigning sovereign. Though the income assigned to his use was specific, the revenues of the whole estate passed through his hands. At the marriage of his parents, a sum of fifty thousand pounds had been set apart by settlement for younger children, (which, thanks to the fecundity so disrespectfully lamented by Percy, left little more than five thousand pounds to each!) and these portions, as well as his mother's jointure of four thousand per annum, were payable only by his order. For the late Lord Askham, like many others encumbered by settlements and deeds of entail, conceiving that all license of bequest was taken out of his hands, had died intestate; and, by the desire of Percy, Philip administered to the estate.

By all this, worlds of business were thrown upon his hands; and perhaps, like his father before him, he might have found little leisure to lament the thinness of the neighbourhood, or badness of

the roads, even had not the limit of their visiting distance been increased by a circumference of at least twenty miles, by his more extended connexion and personal popularity.

The politics of Philip happened to be the prevailing politics of the county; and more than one agreeable family, who had not cared to fag themselves and their horses for the sake of Lord Askham's bitter bread, and bitterer Toryism, now discovered that the hills near Edenbourne were less trying than of old. Nay, the quarter sessions took into their hands the improvement of the roads! So attractive was the surface of the new *ménage* at Eden Castle, that no obstacle ought to impede its approach.

Even the less acceptable neighbours did their best to promote the general desire for a change. Simprems, who, like Mithridates, had fattened on drugs, apprehensive that his recent blunders might tend to diminish his favour at the castle, took occasion, soon after the decease of his noble patron, to dispose of his business to a clever young Scotch practitioner, named Boswell, and retire to the "*otium sine dignitate*"—long whist, and long stories of his native town of Monmouth: thus conferring a double blessing; for Dr. Boswell having made himself and his draughts a little too palatable to the youngest of the Misses Gwatkin, the prudent mother instantly supplied an antidote, by removing her family to Bath.

Certain evil tongues of the Edenbourne market-place decided that the measure arose from the dearth of eligible marrying men within reach of Hexham; while others suggested that Sir Erasmus, unable to support the spectacle of the domestic felicity of Eden Castle, had betaken himself for good to the city so renowned for the cure of gout, rheumatism, and celibacy, where he was more in need of sisterly protection than in the pristine innocence of the Lodge. But whatever the cause of their migration, the benefit was substantial.

"Mrs. Hacket informs me," said Evelyn to her husband, (as they were returning home one balmy April day from a ride in Eden Chase, which had reconciled her to the paces of a somewhat over-spirited mare, presented to her by Philip,) "that, from the letters she receives from Bath, it is probable, Hexham may be let. A pleasant neighbour there would be acceptable enough. You used to complain sadly of want of society at the castle."

"You have not heard me find fault with it lately, I think," replied he, with an affectionate smile. "For some months past, I have discovered it to be the pleasantest as well as most beautiful spot in Great Britain!"

As he spoke, they turned their horses' heads towards the Castle; irradiated at that moment by the western sun streaming on its multitude of windows, so that it seemed lighted for an entertainment. And as they wound their way towards the house, the pleasantness

of its aspect was increased by the sight of little Edward Saville, driving his hoop along the terrace; while at the drawing-room window, anxiously watching for their return, appeared the smiling face of Selina.

Philip Askham had made it his delight to instal the children in their new home, as though they were his own. No past recollections interfered with their obedience to their mother's intimation on her marriage, that their own dear Philip was henceforward to be greeted as "Papa;" and at their tender age, so easily are habits adopted, that (no jealous relatives being at hand to instil misgivings) they soon learned to consider him their father indeed; and to feel their portion in Eden Castle as rightful as in Eastfield. How were *they* to know but that other children received their papas by arrangements similar to those which had suddenly entitled them to participation in the luxuries and liberties of their new home?

For liberty as well as luxury was theirs. Philip had languished too long in the bondage of over-education, not to vote for abolition.—"The dear children were of an age to enjoy themselves.—Time enough in all conscience for samplers and Latin grammar!—The darlings of his sweetest Evelyn were *his* darlings, and must not be tormented."

The Honourable Mr. and Mrs. Askham, in short, could not be too distinct in habits and principles, from the Right Honourable Lord and Lady, their predecessors.

In all but the title, however, their worldly position was the same. Nor would Philip have changed places with the present peer; whose post obits and embarrassments left him at command something less than the dotation settled on the castle by the first Baron, out of the nominal fifteen thousand a-year to which, all incumbrances apart, he succeeded on the death of his father.

Still, in France, such an income was princely. The release of the Earl of Yarmouth having left him without a competitor, Lord Askham was understood to possess the best table in Verdun, the best box in its theatre, and the best actress of its theatre to do the honours of both. The life he led was the best of the worst kind; as well as without prospect of change or amendment. The announcement of his brother's marriage meanwhile, had been received by him in the usual cordial spirit of his reckless nature.

"I heartily wish you joy, dear Philip," replied his letter of acknowledgment; "and with a due sense of my own unworthiness, sincerely thank you for thus providing respectability for two!—Honour, moreover, to the manes of that very wiggy old gentleman, William Lord Askham; (at the star in whose frightful portrait by Kneller, at the end of the East gallery, I remember being detected by my father in the act of shooting peas, as well as the heavy imposition set me for the same!) who, though in his picture he looks no

conjuror, seems to have anticipated the disjointed state of our family representation.

“You have now only to increase my obligations by supplying half-a-dozen sturdy little Askhams, to supersede the possibility of our honours merging once more into a Tory line;—for I cannot stand the notion of Henry!—He writes me, every now and then, a prize essay, which he mistakes for a letter;—enlivened occasionally by a little abuse of *you*;—and now that, to their other sins, his epistles add that of being dated from Uppingham Manor, I can scarcely read them without a fratricidal desire to visit upon young Master Adrian the sins of his Trajan.

“To return, however, to the pleasanter subject of your pretty wife, (whom pretty I know to be, thanks to certain former animadversions of my lady-mother.) Pray place at her feet the sincere good wishes of the poor prisoner of Verdun! Had I been free, and in England, on your wedding-day, I should have taxed my account at Coutts’s to the amount of five hundred guineas, to offer her some token of brotherly regard; and in this, as in all else, I entreat you to be my delegate.—But say to Mrs. Askham in addition, that she would do me a great favour by letting the family diamonds, which you tell me are deposited at the banker’s, see the light on her fair person. It is a pity they should sparkle unseen, while so lovely a representative of the family is at hand to enhance their lustre.

“You will perhaps tax me with having become *complimenteur* in France!—Alas! I have become many worse things!—But in all I have said, dear Phil, though my phrases may have been lengthy as Henry’s, trust me they are as sincere as every other assurance made you by

“Your affectionate brother,

“A.”

At this pointed manifestation of Lord Askham’s partiality towards Philip and his wife, the family in all its branches waxed exceeding wroth. The transfer of the heir-loom diamonds was as great an insult as the transfer of the heir-loom borough had been an injury. But what cared Philip in his happy home, for the grumbling of aunts or cousins? His dearest Evelyn,—his lovely and loving Evelyn,—could not be too richly repaid for the harsh usage she had formerly received at the contumelious hands of Eden Castle!

The change of ministry, too truly foretold by Hardyng, soon assigned to Lord and Lady Uppingham higher duties than the discussion of such petty grievances. To the influential post in the cabinet formerly occupied by the Marquis, was added a place in the household for his wife; and one of his earliest acts in office, was to fulfil his pledges to Henry Askham, by securing him a profitable appointment and the representation of a government borough.

Compelled by the adjustment of Percy’s complicated difficulties

to visit London for a day or two, early in the spring, the first thing Philip had to listen to from Bob Hardyng, was a piquant account of the anguish experienced by the "rising young man" in *forbearing* to rise during some dozen or more initiatory debates, in obedience to the instructions of his brother-in-law.

"Like a newly-caught bird," said Bob, "Henry's restlessness is painful to behold! If Lord Uppingham keeps him much longer beating against the wires, every bone in his skin will be broken!"

News of greater interest, however, were in store for the rustic. Hardyng, who, on visiting Edenbourne for his election, had received so pleasing an impression of Philip's gentle bride, (in whom he was unspeakably surprised to discover the widow of Edward Saville,) that, on his return to town, his enthusiasm in her favour exposed him to the quizzing of their whole set,—had now to relate the strange consequences of his revelations.

"I should like to know what you deserve," said he, (when, after dining with Askham at Brookes's, they sat gossiping together in Philip's old snugery in St. James's Place, to which Hardyng had succeeded,) "for exposing me, last year, to the danger of losing my heart to one whose own was so completely in your keeping as that of Lady Anastasia Grandison?"

"Absurd!" ejaculated his friend, to whom the very name of the Grandisons had become a matter of unconcern. "As if girls in *her* position were susceptible of attachment!"—

"Ay, ay!—Having drawn the thirty thousand pounds' prize, you choose to fancy the wheel filled up with blanks! But, however disparagingly, you may class 'dear Stasy,' or whatever you mean by 'girls in her position,' I can tell you that your happy marriage was very near costing her life!"

"You may as well tell me that it killed the Empress of Austria, whose death the newsmen's horns are now braying in our ears!" rejoined Askham.—"Lady Anastasia Grandison in love?—Why she would have married Middlemore,—Lenitive,—Robert de Lacy,—Norcliffe,—anybody in a decent position in life,—only to escape from home!"

"And from *their* homes, she would have felt as little scruple in escaping," retorted Hardyng, "had you held up your finger to invite her! And so she will from De Bayhurst's,—to whom she has at last promised her hand."

"Going to be married to Sir Hugh de Bayhurst?" cried Askham, with suddenly-enkindled curiosity;—"surely *that* was talked of last year?"—

"I scarcely know the match in London that has not been talked of for her, at one time or other," replied Hardyng. "I happen to know, however, that, *last* season, De Bayhurst was no favourite. He left town in despair, soon after poor Lord Askham's seizure; and I could have sworn,—so wounded was his pride,—that not even

Lady Grandison's most artful machinations would bring him a second time to the scratch!"

"You are mistaken, you see;—as *much* mistaken as in supposing *me* an object of predilection to Lady Anastasia!"

"No Tartuffeism, my dear fellow, I beseech you!" retorted his friend, laughing.—"Do not, because you led me like a lamb to the slaughter at Grandison House, to become the most jilted of lovers or injured of husbands for love of your anything but bright eyes, attempt to deny a fact which is as well known as if published like the Empress's death, per horn of newsman! I tell you it was *I* myself, who, little guessing the pain I was to inflict, acquainted the poor girl with your marriage!—It was into *my* arms she fell, senseless as a stone; and to *me* did Lady Grandison address a private entreaty that for the love of Heaven's mercy, I would not mention to any living soul the subject on which we were conversing, when 'dear Stasy's' secret betrayed itself!"

"I trust and believe you are mistaken!" rejoined Philip, more seriously. "At all events, I have nothing to reproach myself with. I paid Lady Anastasia no attentions, but such as were paid her by twenty other men,—yourself among the number. Never for a moment did I exceed the bounds of common acquaintanceship!"

"For my part, I never know what *are* the bounds of acquaintanceship between girls of eighteen and men of four-and-twenty!" cried Hardyng; "and often thank Heaven I have no sisters, to have the question tangibly brought home to me. One understands one's ground with the fellows with whom one rides to covert, or walks down to the House,—scrupulous not to offer a hand to those with whom one is only a bowing acquaintance. But, according to our English system, (for I can tell you they do these things better in France,) with young ladies, the most unceremonious intimacy appears allowable. Our idle hours cannot be more pleasantly thrown away, than in attentions to any pretty girl who has idle hours to dispose of; precisely because, if in the marrying vein, we may call our civilities courtship, and propose without offence at any moment; or, if laxer in our conscience, as ten millions to one is the case, may slip out of town and divert ourselves elsewhere,—because, forsooth,—as in the case of Mr. Askham and Lady Anastasia Grandison,—we have 'never exceeded the bounds of acquaintanceship!'"

"I do not wince! *My* withers are unwrung!" cried Philip, "for I swear to you that I never tried to recommend myself to Lady Anastasia, nor would at any moment have given a rush for her preference!"

"Not for her *preference* perhaps, but certainly, for the credit of it. You liked to know, on entering a ball-room, that those who saw you first, turned mechanically to Lady Anastasia, to watch her change colour!"

“No, on my soul!—I never thought of her otherwise than as a flirting girl,—open to the attentions of all London,—and eager for those of any fellow who happened to be the fashion.”

“*Mentis gratissimus error!*—She was staking hard money, poor girl, against your counters! I never saw a creature more cut up than she was by your infidelity,—*not* infidelity?—well then,—by your marriage; and I was almost afraid I should have to fall in love with her myself, as an act of expiation, when one fine day the papers announced her match with De Bayhurst; and Lady Grandison, all smiles, and fidgets, and flutter, received my congratulations with those of the rest of London, as coolly as though she had not admitted to me a fortnight before, that the girl was heart-broken for your sake!”

“You are so gross an exaggerator when the fit takes you,” cried Askham, a little moved, “that one never knows what to believe of your stories!”

“Be assured I never exaggerate unless where decency requires that the naked truth should receive a little clothing! In this instance, I am trustworthy as the gazette. For, feeling myself accountant for as great a sin towards Lady Anastasia as your sinful self, I brought myself seriously to book on seeing the poor girl so wretched; and the result of my deliberations was a verdict that half the unhappy marriages in England, and *all* our divorce cases, (a national blot that calls loudly for extirpation!) *arise from the silly habits of flirtation authorised by the customs of society*. Scarcely a girl marries, but has some scar upon her heart. And just conceive, my dear Philip, the bitterness of discovering that the wife one is pressing to one’s bosom, is haunted by the memory of another!”

The habitually pale cheek of Askham became suddenly flushed. To *such* a proposition, it was impossible for *him*—the successor of Edward Saville—to say “amen!”

“By heavens, I think I should cut my throat under such circumstances!” cried Hardyng, more occupied with his own feelings than those of his friend. “However, De Bayhurst marries Lady Anastasia with his eyes open.”

“Since your conscience was so qualmish about her, you should have made atonement by marrying her yourself!” said Askham,—not *very* charitably disposed, at that moment, towards his friend.

“You think, then, that in matrimony, *two* pre-engaged hearts are safer than one?”

“I think *your* temper and sense of equity would prevent your being a brute to your wife;—which is more than I infer from the countenance of De Bayhurst! But what do you mean by *two* pre-engaged hearts? Have you, as I once thought likely, fallen a victim to the smiles of my cousin Helen,—which, like the wings of a bat, have a hook at every junction?”

"Helen Middlemore!"—cried Hardyng, with a gesture of contempt.

"All I know is that at the end of last season, you never left her side."

"It is not *all* you know,—for you are perfectly aware of the motive of my attention."

"To throw off the Grandisons?"—

"To obtain tidings of her cousin!"

"Her *cousin*?"—repeated Askham, with an air of such genuine amazement, that mistrust was impossible.

"Can you *really* be in earnest," said his friend, "in pleading ignorance of my admiration of your sister?—or is it a civil mode of reproving my presumption, for having attached myself to a daughter of the house of Askham?"

"*My sister*!—You attached to my sister Emma!"—cried Philip, starting forward in his chair. "What further surprise, my dear Bob, have you in store for me?—I thought myself pretty clear-sighted on such points; yet I seem to have been walking in my sleep!"

"And so you *have*!—You were in love yourself; and (letting concealment like the worm in the jenneting apple, feed on your rosy cheek,) knew no more than the blind what was passing around you!"

"But how little you saw of Emma!"

"How little you saw of my seeings!—After our helter-skelter visit to Mansfield Street, I contrived to meet her at every ball and party; and dull indeed must be the dog who cannot manage to improve his acquaintance with such a girl, without alarming the heads of a family so true to the whist-table as Lord and Lady Askham!"

"But they left town so shortly afterwards!"

"Not soon enough to forestal my discovery that, though I may never obtain the consent of the family to my proposals, I should be the most miserable of men as the husband of any other woman than your sister."

"Did you ever propose for Emma?"—cried Philip, ceasing to think anything improbable.

"*Why* expose myself to the ignominy of rejection, when you were all openly in favour of Lord Middlemore?"—

"All, except Emma herself. *She* never wavered; and by Jove, I am beginning to suspect *you* were the cause of her firmness. But why did you never explain yourself to *me*?"

"I fancied you fully aware of my attachment, and as thoroughly opposed to it."

"On what grounds? My personal liking for you was pretty evident; and, according to the Grandison mode of judging such matters, you are a very good match for my sister.—Emma has only five thousand pounds."

“If she had not five *pence*, she might make the most brilliant marriage; whereas—”

“Leave *whereases* to your father, my dear Bob!” cried Askham, delighted with the new prospect suddenly unfolding before him.—“For if you still entertain the same feelings and views in this affair—”

“Alas!”—interrupted Hardyng,—(and from the tone and countenance of his friend, Philip began to fear he had been precipitate!)

“The altered position of our party has wrought a grievous change in my prospects,” continued Hardyng. “So long as the Whigs were in power, I was justified in forming high ambitions. As it is, my place, my father’s pension, and private fortune united, would form an insufficient provision for one accustomed to the splendours of Eden Castle.”

“When they suffice for the luxurious comfort of Eske Hill?”—Ridiculous!—But Lord Hardyng perhaps requires you to make a more advantageous match?”

“On the contrary, my father and mother, from whom I have no concealments, were delighted at my choice; more especially as it relieved them from their fears of Grandison House.”

“Then why, in heaven’s name, have you never referred your suit to Emma?”

“You are walking in your sleep *again*, my dear Askham!” cried Hardyng, enchanted at the un hoped-for readiness with which his friend entered into his projets. “Miss Askham is just now as closely secluded as the house of widowhood can make her. How and where am I to approach her?”—

“By letter.”

“And what would she think of my presumption in hazarding, after nearly a year’s separation, so sudden a declaration?”

“Leave that to *me*, if you have really made up your mind.—Though I believe I am as welcome in Mansfield Street as if I brought the plague in my pocket, my mother’s interests compel her to avoid any positive rupture. I will not conceal from you, however, that you have much to apprehend from her objections against any friend of mine; as well as from those of the Uppinghams against any son of your father. But Emma is not the girl to be scolded out of her likings. The more I think of all this, the better I am able to interpret a thousand mysteries in her recent letters to Evelyn!”

“By which you infer that my case is not altogether desperate?”—cried Bob, his face radiant with hope.

“*Far* from desperate,—if you have courage to confront my mother’s ill-humour and the prejudices of one of the most bigoted families extant, short of the grandees of Spain. Think it over, however, my dear Hardyng.—Marriage is too grave a thing to be risked on a sudden impulse. To-morrow, let me know your conclusions, and command my utmost services.

In amore hæc omnia in sunt vitia : Injuriae
Suspiciones, inimicitiae, induciae;

but they signify little, (*experto crede!*) if you are brought off conqueror at last!"

CHAPTER XIV.

Γάμος γὰρ ἀνθρώποιον εἰχταῖον κακόν.

"A son premier amour, une femme n'a jamais peur d'être oubliée, mais à l'aurore du second amour, une femme tremble déjà." OURLIAC.

Philip Askham made proof of his usual short-sightedness in expecting opposition from his mother. The dowager of Mansfield Street was a very different person from the haughty lady paramount of Eden Castle; and though, in the inmost closeness of her close heart, she probably placed the Hardynges in the same category with Simprems and the Hackets, ("all professional people together,") her answer to the proposals placed before her by her son, was, that "Emma might decide for herself. She should neither promote nor oppose the match."

Emma had already decided. On finding that Philip had received from Lord and Lady Hardynges the most flattering overtures for her hand, she no longer attempted to conceal from their son with what joy that hand was accorded; and neither the young people nor the old thought it necessary to examine *very* curiously the motives of Lady Askham's condescension.—Whether she anticipated with satisfaction a release from the presence of one who had fulfilled towards her late lord the duties *she* had neglected, and before whom she could neither parade the broad hems of her post-dated affliction, nor give vent to her jealous animosities against Philip and his wife,—or whether, with three daughters and four sons to provide for, she felt unentitled to reject a settlement of eighty thousand pounds, supported by the prospects of one of the ablest young men of the day,—mattered little to those who asked only as much conciliation at her hands, as was due to the decencies of society.

Family mourning afforded sufficient pretext for a private wedding; and the anxiety of the Hardynges for the settlement in life of their only son, for some haste in the preparations. The awkwardness arising from the coldness between Lord Uppingham and Philip, was consequently diminished; and on the single occasion of a meeting between the families, so stiff were the formalities observed, as to leave no room for unfriendly demonstrations.

Though to Philip naturally devolved the duty of giving away the

bride, fain would he have avoided the occasion for absenting himself a second time from home. But the bridegroom-expectant, having been forced to visit Edenbourne for his re-election, managed to enlist the voice of Mrs. Askham in his favour: and, thus supported, the friend of his boyhood who had proved so much the friend of his manhood, consented to escort him to the altar. Sorely against his will, therefore, Philip accompanied the new member back to town, to resume, once more, his old quarters in St. James's Place.

At Philip's age, however great to a man the effort of tearing himself from a happy fireside, no sooner has he crossed his threshold, than the pang is forgotten. The London world was at its brightest; and it was a pleasant thing to be hailed a thousand times a day with congratulations, and find his hand shaken by friends, instead of having to raise it to touch his hat to greasy bagmen. In his comfortable dressing-room in St. James's Place, moreover, he was secure from having to defend his razors and shaving-brush against the incursions of little Edward Saville.

"It is really a relief to get rid of that riotous boy!" thought he, the morning after his arrival. "The best brought up children are bores, when always about one.—They derange one's habits, and pull about one's things.—I am not naturally fond of children."

In all other respects, his sojourn in town was equally pleasant. It was gratifying to see the warmth of heart with which Lord and Lady Hardyng entered into the approaching happiness of their son, and prepared to do honour to his bride. They seemed to think they could not devote too much time and money to perfect her comfort; and Philip, who had a commission to execute for his wife in procuring a *cadeau* for her dear Emma, was not a little amused, on accompanying Lady Hardyng to the choicest of the fashionable vanity-shops, (to chide tardy jewellers, and inspect new toys and devices for the frivolification of human life,) to discern on all sides testimony to the extent and grandeur of those family connexions of the Grandisons, so often insisted upon by the Countess.

Not a shop they entered, but contained wedding-gifts for Lady Anastasia, ordered by some royal godmother or duchess-aunt. Her ladyship's approaching nuptials seemed to have given a fillip to trade; and the generosity of her bride-groom was almost rendered superfluous by the multiplicity of her wealthy relationships.

"After all, it is pleasant to see one's wife an object of universal interest!" thought Philip, while surveying a gorgeous dressing-box, a present to "dear Stasy" from her uncle, the Duke of Sandbeck. "A serious advantage too to one's children, to be supported, on their entrance into life, by the strength of a well-connected family!"

To remain indifferent concerning the nuptials for which he witnessed these complicated preparations, would have been difficult,

even had the parties been strangers. But with the bride-groom a brother of Edward Saville, and the bride (if Hardynges were to be believed) a victim piqued into matrimony by his misusage, indifference was impossible. Had not his sympathy been somewhat bespoken by the frantic joy of his friend, and the quiet subdued happiness of Emma, (who foresaw among the Hardynges a far more home-ish home than she left behind,) it would have been difficult for Philip to resist his desire to clear up the mysteries surrounding Grandison House, by a visit of congratulation to the Countess. He was curious to see Lady Grandison and Anastasia in their present attitude of triumph.

Chance favoured his desire, though neither in the time nor place he could have wished. In deference to the mourning of Lady Askham, who chose to be present at her daughter's marriage, in her pew, unobserved, and apart from the wedding party, the ceremony was performed, at an early hour in St. James's Church, the family alone present. But by a mistake concerning the door at which the carriages were to be ordered, on emerging from the vestry after the copious signature of witnesses suggested by the professional experience of Lord Hardynges, they found themselves obliged to retrace the body of the church.

To the surprise and annoyance of the quiet family party, it had become filled, in the interim, by the crowd escorting another wedding, resplendent with the pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious fashion; and as the eye of Philip glanced along that gay assemblage, each individual of which was intent upon the display of his own vanities and graces,—instead of, as in the preceding wedding, the happy pair,—he perceived that it comprehended all his more intimate associates; the very existence of whom had been, of late, half obliterated from his remembrance.

Those wedding guests were evidently selected by a hand accustomed to the arduous task of culling friends, at its own good pleasure, among the *élite* of society.—There was royalty—or rather royal highnesshood, with its ladies in waiting, to impart dignity to the scene—There were the beautiful, but somewhat knowing ladies of the sporting lords of the Newmarket *clique*.—There were the showy exotics of the *corps diplomatique*, the beaux of White's, the belles of Carlton House;—and among them, Helen Middlemore, evidently intent upon marking her resentment against Emma, by attending another bridal on the day of her wedding.—

—Facies non omnibus una—
Nec diversa tamen,—

It was a gorgeous spectacle. All that white satin, mechlin, point, and orange flowers, could effect in honour of the solemn institution of matrimony, was brought into play. The Bishop stood ready at the altar,—the royal party advanced its right flank;—and

the mob of dukes, duchesses, and cabinet ministers, was sorely pressed upon by certain ambitious beaux and conceited belles, who, having neither stars nor garters to distinguish them, relied for attraction on the sheen of their satin or fit of their buckskins.

Fain would Philip have escaped from the gaudy *mêlée* into which he was thus provokingly betrayed. But his sister Susan, who was hanging on his arm, enchanted by so new and brilliant a scene, did her utmost to detain him; and ere he could interdict her cousinly greetings with Helen Middlemore, a general movement of the fashionable throng announcing some important arrival, probably the bride for whom they were still waiting, compelled him to keep his place.

It was the Prince of Wales, then in the full zenith of the social favour which succeeded his wilder popularity; the Prince,—ere rendered morose by the cares of state, pompous by the factitious dignities of Hertford House, or peevish by subsequent immurement; the Prince,—as he was when surrounded by friends instead of parasites; and when his *maitresse en titre* was not a woman of title!

The face of Philip soon caught his eye, in the lane formed for his Royal Highness to reach the altar; and with the good-nature which formed the golden foundation of his good breeding, he paused a moment to offer gracious congratulations on his marriage.

At that moment, a second stir announced a new arrival; and *this* time it was the bride indeed;—Lady Anastasia, dimly perceptible through lace and orange blossoms, like a star through a summer cloud; leaning on the arm of the radiant Lady Grandison, and followed by six bridesmaids, selected among the fairest daughters of the nobility.

Impossible to see a lovelier creature, or a prettier group!—Beauty, youth, elegance, distinction, united.—A murmur of admiration saluted them as they entered the church; as if forming a well-bred echo to the enthusiastic cheers of the populace without.

As they approached that part of the aisle where Philip stood detained by his royal companion, Lady Grandison had to cede the arm of her daughter to that of his Royal Highness, which was instinctively extended to conduct her to the altar; and in the movement occasioned by this flattering displacement, the eyes of the lovely bride suddenly encountered those of the embarrassed Philip.

Et neque jam color est misto candore rubori!

The paleness that overspread her features was equalled in intensity only by the scarlet suffusing his own! Impossible to explain the accident which had brought him to the spot where his presence, uninvited, might be deemed an insult; and as she passed on, while the crowd closing joyously behind the bridal procession concealed him from view, the involuntary delinquent became as confused and breathless as herself.

Having hazarded a parting glance towards the altar, as he prepared to quit the church before the commencement of the ceremony, Philip beheld the bridegroom advance to receive from the hands of royalty one of the choicest gifts they had ever conferred; and never was he so struck by the sinister expression of De Bayhurst's handsome face, or the haughty altitude of his fine figure, as when thrown, at that moment, into relief, by the graceful and courteous deportment of the Prince of Wales. For some time after he regained the happy family party awaiting him in Mansfield Street, his thoughts involuntarily recurred to that saturnine bridegroom!

On the morrow, indeed, the scandalous chronicle of the clubs asserted that the collision of the two weddings had been expressly devised by the malice of Lady Grandison,—indignant at the secession from her circle of two such favoured votaries as Philip and his friend; in the hope that the splendour of her daughter's *entourage* might cast into the shade the modest nuptials of one whom she no longer considered otherwise than as “the lawyer's son.”—For though, in truth, she would have given much to avoid an encounter so trying to the feelings of “dear Stasy,” at a moment when she found it inconvenient that dear Stasy should have feelings at all, she enjoyed all the benefit of an indifferent reputation in the paltry motives assigned for her conduct.

“I wonder whether Anastasia recognised me!—I wonder whether I was noticed by that surly brute De Bayhurst!—I wonder to what motive they attributed my seeming intrusion into their wedding party!”—meditated the perplexed man, on his way back the following day to Eden Castle; and though not a particular of the scene had escaped him, and he was fain to admit that nothing could have been more imposing than the arrangement of those brilliant hymeneals, not a syllable did he breathe on the subject to his wife, when answering, on his return home, her numberless questions concerning the bridal of her dear Emma.

“What a charming wedding!” said she, after listening to his abridged account of the sober little family assemblage of Askhams and Hardynges. “Lord and Lady Uppingham being on duty at Windsor, their absence can have excited no attention.—It was almost as quiet and happy a wedding as our own!”

A moment afterwards, Philip, who had not listened to a word of her comments, carelessly observed, that the solemn words of the ritual did not impress him so much from the lips of his sister Emma, as from those of Lady Uppingham.

“I suppose I looked upon Margaret's happiness as less secure,” said he; “and the number of persons present, and the imposing dignity of the scene, certainly rendered in that instance the service more august. Too much consequence cannot be assigned to such solemnizations, in families whose connexions justify publicity. As Lord Hardynges truly observed, there cannot be too many

witnesses.—Something suspicious in a marriage ceremony slurred over in a corner!”—

Mrs. Askham had every right to feel mortified, under the impression that he was thinking of his own; or perhaps of her first runaway match. He was, in truth, thinking only of Lady Anastasia’s!—But it was not with Edward Saville’s widow he could discuss the wedding of Sir Hugh de Bayhurst.

That day, Philip felt for the first time importuned by having to carry little Edward on his back into the drawing-room, after dinner, according to a custom he had himself established; and when the knock of the nurse was heard at the door to summon Miss Selina to bed, instead of supporting her usual petition for a reprieve, he agreed with mamma and the judicious old Susan, that “it was a sad thing for little girls to sit up late.”

Perhaps he wished to be alone with Evelyn. Perhaps he desired to confide to her, more fully, the lights and shadows of his trip to town,—the bridal gifts he had seen preparing—the grateful acceptance of her affectionate offering; or, dismissing from his mind the frivolous particulars of which, during the last few days, he had “supped full,” as well as breakfasted sufficiently, he might be anxious to communicate some of those items of political rumour over which he had found Brookes’s wrangling, like a mastiff over its chain.

Scarcely!—For within ten minutes of the children’s departure for bed, he was extended on the sofa, fast asleep!—

Evelyn was not a little startled on perceiving that the gift with which she had greeted him on his arrival,—a moss-rose bud, of which she had walked every day to the conservatory to watch the progress, and culled at the last moment, that it might be the freshest as well as first of the season,—had fallen from his button-hole, and was lying crushed upon the floor!

It requires, perhaps, somewhat more than the philosophy of five-and-twenty, to find the country as pleasant on returning to it from London, as London appears on visiting it from the country. In spring, London is more the country,—that is, the country of fine ladies and gentlemen,—than the country itself. Forced flowers and fruit abound in the metropolis, when the country exhibits only a few precocious starvelings, reared in its scattered hothouses; and when, after luxuriating in this fragrance and profusion at some charming London fête, amid strains of the choicest music and smiles of the fairest faces, one is called upon for wonder and gratitude for a simple moss-rose bud, such as the flowers-carts and flower-girls of Bond Street have vulgarized in our eyes, it is difficult to set due value on the treasure unless at the instigation of what it is somewhat questionable that Philip Askham really possessed,—a heart.

The attention of Evelyn was not long engrossed by her rejected flower. Her eyes fixed themselves wistfully upon the manly form

and handsome features only too powerfully impressed upon her heart; and having laid aside her work for the indulgence, she seemed to fancy that, by interrogating the countenance of her sleeping husband, she might obtain indications of all he had been seeing, thinking, feeling, and frequenting, in the great city to which she was so much a stranger.

The result was far from satisfactory. She discovered at once upon his brow a care-worn expression,—an expression such as it used to wear when, harassed by his worries at Eden Castle, he repaired to *her* society for comfort and repose!—What could have annoyed him in town?—Had Lord Askham been disgracing himself by some new excess?—or had the dowager insulted her son by fresh sarcasms upon his marriage?

Poor Evelyn was the more anxious in her conjectures, because, during his absence a circumstance had occurred likely to excite his displeasure. With the sure instinct of her sex, she dreaded the first open difference of opinion between them. The first dispute between a newly-married pair is the first gray hair amid the golden curls of Cupid: and if it have been quoted millions of times from Rousseau, that “Love is born with the first sigh, and dies with the first kiss,” be it henceforward added that the love which survives the first domestic quarrel, becomes thenceforward limping and graceless as a Chelsea pensioner.

The grounds on which Mrs. Askham felt the evil to be impending over her, were not, however, very alarming. On the day after Philip's departure, the Shetland pony, so long promised to little Edward by poor Sir Erasmus, had made its appearance. Aware that it had been bespoke the preceding year from the Highlands, she fancied that, during the absence of the old gentleman from the lodge, it might have been unadvisedly despatched by the servants to its original destination.

But no!—A new saddle and bridle had been forwarded at the same time from Bath, with express directions from Sir Erasmus that the gift should be carefully conveyed to his little friend, by an old Indian servant named Moutiar, to whose care the boy had often been entrusted at the lodge.

To reject a present previously accepted, Mrs. Saville felt to be impossible, even had not her delighted boy's enjoyment been so much at stake. Yet she suspected,—she *feared*,—that Philip might feel vexed that a pleasure should have been accorded to the child by any hand but his own,—most of all, by that of Sir Erasmus!

In this surmise, however, she was guided by a knowledge of particulars undreamed of by her husband.

To Philip, the old bachelor was still only a ridiculous personage, who had magnified the absurdity of his habits and appearance, by pretending to recommend himself to the favour of a woman young and lovely. But in the estimation of Philip's wife, he had established

himself on a far different footing!—Sir Erasmus was the only person who had remonstrated with her on the imprudence of her second marriage.

“Do not imagine, madam,” said he, having made his way to Eastfield one cheerless afternoon, soon after the death of Lord Askham, “do not imagine that I am actuated by resentment of your indifference, or jealousy of your favour to another. I admit the folly of my past pretensions. Your disdain has opened my eyes to many things; and I am fain to acknowledge that an ill-favoured whimsical old man, would have been an inadequate partner for one so gifted as yourself.—Still, I have the power to secure the welfare of your children,—I am richer than the world or my habits of life would lead you to suppose:—and all—*all* would have been for Edward and Selina!”

A few embarrassed words, indicating that, under any circumstances, it would have been impossible for her to invade the rights of his sister and nieces, encouraged the old man to resume his expostulation.

“My sister and nieces are amply provided for,” said he. “I have a right to gratify my own feelings in the bequeathment of my property; and forgive me if I once fondly fancied that your affection for your little ones might induce you to overlook, in *their* behalf, my demerits of age and person. Bear witness for me, however, madam, that from the moment you undeceived me, I ceased to importune you with my attentions. Not from sullenness,—not from resentment;—but from feelings such as the years which render me disgusting, ought to have enabled me to survive!”

Through the twilight obscuring the room, Evelyn could not discern the features of her guest. In his voice only was the struggle of his feelings perceptible.

“But though I have latterly abstained from your society,” continued he, “my heart has never been absent from this chamber! From a distance have I carefully watched over you and yours. Not a movement has escaped me. While avoiding to expose my grotesque person to the sneers and mimicry of the object of your preference, I have marked with fear and trembling his progress in your affections:—*not* as regards my own peace of mind, but *yours*! I know him better than *you do*,—I know *you* better than you know yourself,—and trust me, that when his prepossessing exterior has ceased to charm, you will admit that you did wrong to place your happiness in the keeping of a cold-hearted egotist, and the welfare of your children at the mercy of one who, bred in the school of tyranny, will eventually prove a tyrant!—Philip Askham, madam, has suffered persecution without learning mercy.—The frosts of such a home as his destroyed the early germs of humanity in his heart!”

Against such an accusation, Philip Askham’s affianced wife naturally raised her voice to remonstrate. But the old man insisted,

at once so mildly and earnestly, on being heard to an end, that she resigned herself to listen.

“And when the illusions of love are at an end,” said he, “as will be the case far sooner than you foresee,—what will remain to console you for having given a harsh father to your children, and diminished your own care of them by the claims of a second family? Nothing—absolutely *nothing*! The patrimony of this favoured man consists of five thousand pounds,—a princely provision, truly, to be divided among future children of his own! So that, reared in the enjoyment of luxuries secured by his present income, your boy and girl will contract tastes and ambitions wholly unjustifiable. For them, he can do nothing;—except what, as sure as there is a God above us, do he will,—*loathe* them, as the offspring of another man,—and oppress them, as his rivals in your heart?”

The conscience-stricken widow of Edward Saville made no further attempt to silence him. Her utterance was impeded by tears.

“I forewarn you of all this, madam,” resumed he, “*not* with the slightest expectation of detaching you from Philip Askham. You are pledged too deeply. Things have gone too far. You have placed your own happiness too completely at his mercy, to leave you free for the consideration of your children’s! I have laid the case before you, rather for the clearance of my conscience, (*you*, fatherless,—brotherless,—friendless!) than from the hope of bringing you to reason.—But this is not all.—I am about to leave this place. The happiness of Eden Castle,—the abandonment of Eastfield,—would be too trying to me to witness. And before I—go,—I wish,—I could desire,—I——”

His voice, hitherto sustained by a strong resolution, became almost inarticulate with sobs.—For a moment there was a painful pause.

“Those children are very dear to me,”—said he, at length, in faltering accents,—“very, *very* dear!—They are the only human beings saving *you*, to whom in my long life I ever attached myself. My feelings towards them are not altered,—*cannot* be altered by your disgust to me, or passion for another.—On the contrary, I love them better,—for I feel they will need compensation! If, therefore, madam,—if, therefore, my dear Evelyn,—at any future moment, the fulfilment of my evil auguries should necessitate the interposition of a friend,—bear in mind that you have one who will never fail you. Wherever you may be, so long as I abide on this earth, shall I abide your bidding!”—

It was not difficult to make suitable acknowledgments to this only too feeling adjuration. The heart of the young mother was deeply touched. Still, displeasure at his accusations against Philip qualified her emotions of gratitude; and though, while Sir Erasmus was taking his last leave of her with a degree of stern solemnity that caused her very blood to thrill, she saw in his conduct only the

strength of affection dictating his offers, no sooner was he gone,—no sooner had she dried the tears from her cheeks, and composed her demeanour to receive the usual visit of him, to whom she had pledged her heart and hand,—than she began to regard him anew as a jealous, peevish, disappointed old man. The banterings of Philip touching “her superannuated beau,” rendered him contemptible in her eyes; and as to his terrible charge against the temper of her future lord, she had no difficulty in persuading herself, that, according to his own mode of parlance, “there was nothing in it!”

In moments less infatuated, however, it was impossible not to recur with gratitude to his professions of attachment to her children. Edward and Selina were so destitute of friends, and so ill apportioned with the things of this world, that the good will of an affectionate and affluent protector, was not to be despised. In the event of her death, what was to become of them? Though, in his last illness, poor Saville had addressed to his family a letter placing his orphans under their protection, no notice had ever been vouchsafed to the application!

When, therefore, the pony made its appearance at Eden Castle, (the first indication of a relenting spirit given by Sir Erasmus since her marriage,) she felt that, to reject the proffered olive branch, would be unjustifiable. But how was she to induce Philip to forgive himself, and *her*,—that the little shaggy favourite enjoying itself in his pastures, and more beautiful in the eyes of Edward than either the pastures or the Castle they surrounded, was the gift of another!

These misgivings, and the apprehension that the weariness of her husband arose from having forsaken greater pleasures in London than he expected to find in the country, rendered her cheeks so colourless, that, on opening his eyes and finding her watching over him, Philip could not refrain from a somewhat uncomplimentary exclamation.

“How pale and doleful you are looking, Evelyn!”—said he. “After the gay wedding cheer and wedding faces among which I have lately found myself, it seems like coming to a funeral!”—

But Evelyn was pale no longer. The sarcasm had already restored colour to her cheek.

Next day, she was careful to propose an early walk; desirous of being the first to point out to him the new favourite of the children; and, unused to manœuvres, it was astonishing how awkwardly she managed to bring him round to that part of the park where Elshie was installed, and how incoherently she related the story of its arrival.

She had expected his displeasure to burst forth.—She soon found that a dead silence may convey a still stronger reproof!

“Is it not a pretty creature?”—said she, at last, as the pony,

accustomed to be petted, came tossing its shaggy head towards them.

“*Very!*”—was the laconic reply; and to conceal her embarrassment, Mrs. Askham bestowed on poor Elshie more notice than her husband cared perhaps to see bestowed on any living object but himself.—For he turned away in moody silence.

A moment afterwards, little Edward, who had been watching their movements from a distance, came bounding towards the pony.

“*I may* come now, may’nt I?”—cried the boy, whom his mother had cautioned the preceding night to make no allusion to Elshie without her leave.

“You told me not to say a word about the pony before papa, till you had brought him to see it,” said Edward. “But now, surely I may get on my dear little Elshie again!”—

Philip appeared to turn a deaf ear to the conversation; and his wife believed him to be too angry with her for accepting a present from a man so much the object of his scorn as Sir Erasmus L’Estrange, to take heed of what was passing. But she was soon undeceived. The gloomy silence he maintained as they returned arm-in-arm towards the house, was broken as they entered the hall by his observing, in a constrained voice,—“It is a pity ever to teach duplicity to children! They despise those towards whom they are instructed to be artful, as well as those by whom the lesson is taught.”

The bosom of his wife swelled too proudly for reply. It was not till she reached her dressing-room that she gave vent to her tears. To be rebuked for hypocrisy, and rebuked by *him!*—him, to whom her whole heart was open. Or, if she reserved from his participation a few bitter feelings, it was only as a parent takes from the hands of an idolized child, some toy by which it may be endangered.

After the first ebullition of grief, however, she composed herself into a resolution to make no further allusion to what had passed. It would be impolitic,—it would be *worse* than impolitic,—to render the children their first grounds of dissension. The warning of Sir Erasmus, on that point, recurred opportunely to her mind.

Alas! from the moment the word “policy” interferes between the unrestrained confidence of a wedded couple, half the happiness of married life is lost!

Luckily there was no occasion to revert to their disagreement. Philip met her again with a smiling countenance. He was in the highest spirits. He had received a letter from Hardyng. “Hardyng and Emma were about to visit Eden Castle.” The happy bride had profited by her present ascendancy to secure a glimpse of her old home, and beloved sister-in-law.

“I always fancied,—(blockhead that I was!)” wrote Bob,—

“that a man was master of his own honey-moon; and consequently planned an excursion to the Isle of Wight. But my wife,—(I never placed the words in black and white before,—suffer me to pause a moment and contemplate the effect!) MY WIFE—(ahem!) insists on shaking hands with your’s, before we settle in town. For two days to come, we shall find our Hybla at Eske Hill; after which, prepare a corner of your hospitable mansion to receive the happiest of men!—I leave the happiest of women to announce her own intentions; concluding that, for this one single month of our lives, they will be synonymous.”

“How happy Mr. Hardyng seems, and how much in love!” said Evelyn, after perusing the letter placed by Philip in her hand.

“Yes! I never saw a fellow happier.—Why not?—There is no drawback to *his* happiness! He marries, with the approbation of his family, a girl deserving his choice; to whom he is the object of a first and only affection.”

“You think, then,” said his wife, trusting no tremulousness was discernible in her voice “that Emma is as much in love as himself?”

“Quite as much! No man attaches himself as strongly as Hardyng has done, unless certain of possessing an *exclusive* hold over the woman to whom he pledges his affection!”

“It is strange,” pursued Evelyn, conscious that wherever she set her foot must be tender ground,—“it is *very* strange that your two sisters, brought up under the same roof and same authority, should have formed such different notions of domestic happiness!”

“Their *dispositions* are different!” rejoined Philip. “Margaret has a sweet temper; but, like most of your very quiet people, is cold and calculating. Emma is wild and petulant. But there is neither art nor artifice in her nature.—Emma is all affection,—all heart!”

It was not long since Mrs. Askham had heard him assign the palm to the mild serenity of Lady Uppingham!—Had *all* his thoughts and feelings undergone a revolution?—With whom had he been living in London, to have operated so sudden a change? Was Sir Erasmus so soon justified in his forebodings? Was Philip already susceptible to the jealousy of having a predecessor in her heart?

Lucky that the arrangements about to be made for the expected visit of the Hardynges afforded a diversion to such painful reflections! Nor could Philip long preserve towards his gentle wife a countenance of resentment. Stern as he was growing,

Nature never made
A heart all marble;—but in its fissures, sows
The wild flower, Love, from whose rich seed spring forth
A world of mercies and sweet charities!

CHAPTER XV.

Alas! no prelate's lawn, with hair shirt lin'd,
Is half so incoherent as his mind!

POPE.

Elle appartenait à ces natures, amies de la joie, qui la poursuivent partout, comme les hirondelles le printemps ; gais oiseaux, vivant de soleil et de changement, traversant toute tristesse à tire d'ailes.

RIONEL.

Optimum vitæ genus eligito, nam consuetudo faciet jucundus.

PYTHAGORAS.

It was enough to make the old young again, — or rather, it might have converted Sir Erasmus L'Estrange into an Amadis, — to witness the happiness of the young couple that soon afterwards arrived at Eden Castle!

Philip was forced to admit that Hurstwood and fifteen thousand a year could have done nothing to enhance the smiles of his sister; and as to Bob, though mercurial from his childhood, never till now had he seemed fully sensible of the elasticity of the earth he trod on, or the buoyancy of the atmosphere appointed him to breathe. — There was nothing, — no, not even the triumph of the Tory administration — which he did not view *en couleur de rose*!

“We shall gain all the more credit,” said he, “by turning them out!”

But at a moment when so many stirring interests prevailed in the metropolis, he could scarcely understand how a man in the prime of youth and intellect, like Philip, could tether himself for life among sheep and kine, and invest his ambitions in the manuring of land and fattening of cattle.

“Is it possible, my dear Askham, that you mean to dawdle away your days at Eden Castle?” cried he, after a long ride with him across the estate. “Why, you have not a creature to speak to! Were you ever so much in want of a quarrel to quicken your circulation, not a soul on whom to wreak your ill humour! The few houses inhabited at the time of the election, are now standing empty. — Eastfield, — ‘to be let furnished;’ — every window-shutter closed of yonder barrack at the top of the hill, — and the putty-coloured old *croquemitaine* belonging to that beautiful place near Edenbourne, either dead or *déménagé*. By Jove! I never saw such a neighbourhood. You might as well live at Tadmor in the Desert. And now there are no fieldsports going on, by way of interlude to the tragedy, you and your wife will certainly be found

dead of the dulls, some fine morning; and the jury bring in a verdict of 'DIED for want of the common pastimes of life!' recommending the case to the consideration of the stewards of the county races!"

"My capering days are past!"—said Philip, carelessly. "How often, my dear Bob, did we sigh in London last year, for the quiet of the country?"

"Because the country was just then the Elysium of the angels of our souls!—But now that we can transport them with us to the head quarters of civilization, *au diable les bleuets et les pâquerettes!*—Who would not rather hear Sheridan speak, than the brooks babble?—Who would not rather dine at Carlton House, than watch yonder oxen grazing,—like beasts as they are!"—

The "bucolical juvenal" of Eden Castle, tried to laugh off this home-thrusting attack; but the attempt was abortive.

"Even if you withstand *those* temptations, my dear fellow," resumed Hardyng, "how will you be able to deny yourself the luxury of your brother's maiden speech? Think of Henry, with his prim self-satisfied air, convulsed by the throes of his first delivery!—Conceive how he will monster his nothings; and how Lord Uppingham will go about, like a tender parent or guardian, protesting, with his *air capable*, that the nothings are like Caliban, very "delicate monsters," and *we* but drunken Trinculos, unworthy to do them homage!"—

"I am content to take the absurdities of my family upon trust," replied Philip. "If Henry wants taking down, no doubt *you* will work him famously."

"But why not come and witness the sport? My father and mother have given up Eske Hill to us. Why not make it your home for the rest of the season!"

Firmly, though gratefully, Philip persisted in denial; and the following day, when Emma, having borrowed Mrs. Askham's mare, did the honours of her old neighbourhood to her husband, by pointing out to his art-educated eye the choicest landscapes of Eden Chase,—umbrageous nooks that Hobbima or Gainsborough might have painted,—or some ruined mill, or leaping brook, or new-felled copse, which Ruysdael or Constable would have transferred to canvas with scarcely less vivid reality,—he could not refrain from accusing the inertness of her brother.

"Philip seems as bent on self-sacrifice," said he, "as some eastern dervise, who secures his salvation by standing for half a century upon one leg; or St. Simon Stylites, on his column. He reminds me of the fellows who put out an eye or cut off a finger, in order to evade the militia that would take them from their *lares* and *penates*."

"Philip is so happy with Evelyn, that he no longer cares for London!"

“Not happier than I am with Emma,—yet *I* do not make proof of my conjugal affection by renouncing the sacred ties of fellow-creatureship. Why can they not come and stay with us in town?”

“Because he would not like to bring the children, nor *she* to leave them behind.”

“But is Philip always to sacrifice his pleasures and interests, to those confounded children?” cried Hardyng with indignation.

“Don’t confound the children, if you please; for prettier or more promising never were seen!” was Emma’s good-humoured reply.

“Nay, I have no fault to find with them, not being in Philip’s place; though, by Jove, it would drive me out of my mind to see *my* wife bestow endearments on another man’s offspring, and be forced to study their convenience. My darling Emma!—I would as soon have married the witch of Endor, as a widow!”

“Beware how you express that sentiment before Philip!” cried his wife. “Beware of even renewing your invitation; for should it prove the means of rendering him less satisfied with his home I would *never* forgive you!”

“No man in his senses is talked out of his conjugal affection,” replied Hardyng. “We swear by our wives—or *at* them,—at the suggestion of our wicked will. Philip takes the former line. But between ourselves, dear Emma, much as he is attached to Evelyn, I wish he had married a woman with a little more spice of the devil.”

“Like myself?”—interrupted his wife, laughing.

“For Mrs. Askham’s gentle nature will sooner or later make a tyrant of him,” continued her husband. “Philip requires some one who, when he protests that black is white, will not be bullied into adding—‘as snow!’”

“I am afraid he has not the best of tempers!” said Emma, patting her pretty barb, as it sidled away from a gigantic oak, the most ancient of the Chase, which still extended a few of the distorted branches said to have given shelter to Queen Elizabeth. “But it is his only fault.”

“I never had any disagreement with him,” replied Hardyng.

“Because you disagree with nobody!”

“On the contrary,—at this moment, I disagree with my wife,—who describes a man’s temper as his ‘only fault;’—whereas ill-temper, darling of my heart, is but the varnish that brings out pre-existent evil qualities. What we call ill-temper, is the combination of a sanguine temperament with envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. It is only when a man’s *selfishness* is ruffled, or his *jealousy* excited,—or his *vanity* wounded,—that he gives vent to the demonstrations we choose to call temper. Were a really amiable person as fiery as Hotspur, he could not be taxed as ill-tempered.”

“Hear, hear, hear, hear, hear!” cried his wife, delighted to find him betrayed into a lecture. “A cheer for the luminous exposition of the Hon. Member for Edenbourne!”

“What Philip’s friends ought never to forgive themselves,” added her husband, after reproving her saucy interruption with his uplifted whip,—“is having suffered him to resign his appointment.”

“Consider the terms he was on with Lord Uppingham, by whose interest it was procured!”

“*Will* you please to let a fellow finish his sentence? I was about to say resign his appointment at the eleventh hour, when it was no longer in the power of the Whigs to provide employment for his talents. Conceive what will be his situation when Lord Askham, sooner or later, returns from exile; and Philip finds himself *sans sou ni maille*,—with half a dozen children on his hands, (without counting the little Savilles,) and not even a dog-kennel for shelter!—Too late, then, for a profession!”

“I suspect Percy would gladly secure himself against Eden Castle, by continuing the income he now allows his brother!” said Mrs. Hardyng.

“*A d’autres, à d’autres!*—It was never Eden Castle he hated; it was the decency and subordination of the paternal roof. Men of Lord Askham’s kind are content with any house, where they can have their own way.”

“Certain it is that Philip, whom we cannot induce to quit the place, disliked it formerly as much as Percy.”

“Never was the abdicated monarch yet, dearest Emma, who did not long to clutch back the sceptre he had abjured! Take my word for it, whenever your eldest brother returns, there will be an end to Philip’s viceroyalty at Eden Castle.”

“In that case, I agree with you,” cried his wife, “that it is lamentable he should have blighted his prospects in life! He must *not* cut short his public connexions. I will do my best to induce him to visit us in town.”

She might as well have tried her eloquence on one of the marble statues in the vestibule! Flattering himself he was only firm, Philip was obstinate as a mule. Independent of all other objections, his self-love could not bear that *his* wife should appear in town for the first time, in so undistinguished and undistinguishable a position, at a moment when the bride of Sir Hugh de Bayhurst was shining as a star of the first magnitude.

For already, the newspapers abounded in flourishes concerning Lady Anastasia’s new mansion and its embellishments. The injurious glare of the puff-preliminary, was of course lavished on the fashionable daughter of the fashionable Lady Grandison; her mother seeming to fancy, like the Chinese, that a prodigious drumming of drums and sounding of trumpets, would drive away the evil spirits menacing the tranquillity of her child.

“How much of the happiness of life, dear Stasy seems content to purchase in the upholsterer’s shop!” cried Hardynges, after perusing one of these foolish paragraphs;—little surmising that, to the simple-minded Mrs. Askham, to whom his observation was addressed, his own ardent interest in politics, and Emma’s in his political career, appeared quite as unaccountable.

Notwithstanding her sisterly attachment to Mrs. Hardynges, it was, in fact, a relief to Mrs. Askham, when she and her gay-hearted husband returned to town. When subdued by her dutiful attendance on her father, Emma was a far more congenial companion for the gentle Evelyn, than the animated young woman who now entered into the energetic projects of her husband, with all the intenser eagerness that, from the quiet tenour of her early life, possessed for her the attraction of novelty.

Nor had Hardynges been able to conceal from the observant eye of a mother, what a nuisance he considered her children. In the first expansion of wedded happiness, Philip had insisted on having them always in the room, and conceding them a thousand indulgences to which they were unaccustomed. Especially to Selina! To *her* he seemed to think peculiar compensation due, for the loss of the undivided tenderness of her mother; and the little creatures being now habituated to the system, it would have been cruel to recur to more wholesome habits of discipline, because “Papa” was a less impassioned lover. The favour of the children having actually been *courted* by Philip to recommend him to that of their mother, he could not turn round upon them *now*!

At all events, he could not turn round upon them *yet*; though more than once sorely tempted, during the visit of the Hardynges. He too had noticed the impatient shrugs of Bob, when their noise after dinner interrupted the discussion of the great letters of the day’s paper, or the still pleasanter chat in which his intelligent bride took so animated a part.

Conscious that the evil was of his own creation, Philip had not the injustice to complain; but the shrugs of Hardynges sank deep into his mind.

“I am afraid Edward will grow up a little turbulent, unless you occasionally make some effort to check him!” said he to his wife, some time after the departure of the Hardynges, (as though he had been brooding over the evil,)—on seeing the boy give chase to his nurse among, and over, the parterres of the new flower-garden, —rather than submit to have the nursery-*lasso* thrown over him, and be carried off with his sister. — “He is getting *too* unruly!”

It was not for the mother to plead that this self-same unruliness had been heretofore termed “spirit,” and applauded accordingly.

“Edward is a manly little fellow of his age,” was her mild rejoinder; “and almost beyond nursery governance.”

The stepfather thought so too. But he also thought that for little boys beyond nursery governance, school was the safest place. Evelyn had, however, so constantly protested at Eastfield against preparatory schools, that it was hardly possible to ask her to recant, merely because translated to the higher see of Eden Castle!

He contented himself with observing that, for the boy's own sake, governance of some kind or other was indispensable.

"It would be unfair to the child," said he, "to let him acquire habits of insubordination, that will be flogged out of him hereafter. He is very young certainly; but,

'Just as the tree is bent, the twig's inclined!'

Of that dictum, however, his wife was inclined to dispute the wisdom.—And with reason.—For there are twigs both human and ligneous, wholly unsusceptible of training: nor can the rigid cedar or knotted holly be adapted to the same purposes as the supple osier.—A thousand-horse power of education would never have subdued the vivacities of Percy Askham into the demure and pretentious gravity of Henry; or the recklessness of Edward Saville into the docility of Selina.

The gentle wife contented herself with repeating that, were the power of education infallible, the characters of his sisters would scarcely exhibit such striking dissimilarity.

"Perhaps not!" was the angry rejoinder of Philip, who, finding he had the worst of the argument, revenged himself by the cowardly act of removing the button from his foil;—"but I do not see why a difference of temper between Lady Uppingham and Mrs. Hardyng should render it impossible for Master Edward Saville to be sent to school, like other boys of his age."

Mrs. Askham was silenced.—A sudden pang shot through her frame; and it was a relief when her husband, as much vexed with himself for having been provoked into this ungenerous thrust, as with *her* for provoking it, retired to his own study to chew the bitter cud of repentance.

The hint she had received, however, was not to be neglected. She lost no time in placing a discreet limitation to the freedom of the children. She saw that it was necessary to take precautions;—that they must be taught to behave as if in the house of a benefactor, not of a father;—and nursery discipline was once more stringently enforced.

But the fond mother repaid herself for the loss of their company in the drawing-room, by lingering longer beside their beds, when she repaired in secret to the nursery to give them her benediction. And after imprinting her nightly kiss on the forehead of the sleeping Selina, or parting the darkly-clustering curls of Edward the better to contemplate his noble countenance, old Susan often stole on tip-toe to the cribs of her nurslings after her mistress's departure, to

ascertain whether those quiet earnest kisses were not intermingled with tears!

Unwilling to admit, even to the nurse who had attended the children from their infancy, and waited on her own girlhood when little more than a child, that her husband had already discovered that all was not perfection in his *ménage*, she assumed to herself the blame; declaring "the noise of the children to be too much for her." And when the kind-hearted old woman took their part somewhat wrathfully against this newly-acquired delicacy of nerves, Evelyn preferred admitting, as an excuse for her fastidiousness and a plea for indulgence, (what she had hitherto, through some inexplicable scruple kept a secret from her faithful attendant,) that she was likely to become again a mother;—rather than that Philip should incur a blame which he deserved too richly for the woman who loved him to hear applied without pain.

Meanwhile, the several instincts of their sex were apparent in the different modes in which the children adapted themselves to the new arrangements. To *them* could not be alleged the pretext suggested to Susan; and on finding himself required to desist from trampling on the flower-beds, and racing along corridors, because "papa disliked a noise," Edward boldly and defyingly renewed the offence!

"He did not care for papa!—He had always made a noise at Eastfield.—He *would* make as much noise as he liked, unless it disturbed dear mamma."

Dear mamma instantly issued a prohibitory decree; and the resistance of the little fellow was suspended. But Selina, who, though she had never resisted, listened with all her ears and all her heart to the admonitions provoked by her brother, seemed intuitively to understand the truth,—that "papa must not be disturbed because it made him angry with mamma;"—and from that moment, she attached herself silently to her mother's side, as if conscious how much she needed consolation.

For even Evelyn herself now occasionally managed to give offence to the "dear Philip" who had so soon become "papa,"—almost as much papa as his father! Though timid to a fault, (if in a woman any amount of timidity can be excessive,) she had not retained for more than six years the independence of widowhood, without forming opinions of her own; always blameless ones; though she neglected the more valuable art of thinking twice ere she gave them utterance. So slight, indeed, was her self-estimation, that she fancied it mattered little what *she* thought, or how she expressed it!—But after the visit of the Hardynges, her inadvertence often subjected her to reproof.

It happened that, one day, the key of the Eden Castle post-bag was mislaid; and Philip, its usual custodian, after wasting as many oaths on his carelessness as a corporal of dragoons, saw fit to de-

spatch one of the stable-men to Edenbourne, at ten o'clock at night, to fetch the duplicate key from the postmaster.

Certain that, at that hour, the office would be closed, (the London mail arriving at eight,) Mrs. Askham suggested the prudence of first renewing their search for the missing key.

But Philip would not hear of it. — "If they lost more time, he might have to wait till the morrow!"

"And *can* you not wait till to-morrow, dear Askham?"—mildly inquired his wife, intending no offence. "We heard yesterday, you know, from Emma.—Surely there is nothing *very* urgent in the bag?"

"How can you tell!"—cried he. "*I* have other correspondents than the Hardynges.—Besides, there are the newspapers."

"The *newspapers*?" repeated Evelyn, with a smile.—"Surely, dearest, we might wait for the newspapers? Nothing amazes me more," added she,—incautiously, seeing that he was in a contradictory humour,—"*than the excessive interest which men take in newspapers!*"

"And nothing more surprises *me* than that there should exist a woman capable of wondering at it!" cried Philip, in his turn. "Newspapers contain the history of the world. You make it a matter of pride to study, under the name of history, the mere epitome of obsolete newspapers! Why be ashamed to interest yourself in what may be regarded as the moral bulletin of mankind?"

"I fear I am interested in very few persons out of this house," replied Evelyn, with a sigh,—wondering what could thus excite his feelings.

"A singular matter of boast! The limitation of a person's sympathies betokens only narrowness of mind, or coldness of heart."

"But in whom or what would you *have* me interest myself?"—remonstrated Evelyn, struggling against her growing emotions.

"In all that is great and worthy among your countrymen;—in the fate of nations, the prosperity of countries, the progress of mankind."

"I am not, I trust, devoid of interest in the welfare of my fellow-creatures," said Evelyn, deeply wounded. "But I have not been much in the way of hearing politics discussed. I have never lived among party people."

"I did not suppose you had. But why make a merit of the deplorable disconnexion from society, which renders you insensible to the present stirring march of public events?"

Mrs. Askham, finding herself on the verge of tears, determined that this taunt should pass unnoticed. She was aware that it is a trying thing to a man to lose the key of the post-bag! Great allowances were to be made for the irritability of Philip. Instead, therefore, of attempting a rejoinder, she quitted the work-table opposite to which he was seated in a lounging-chair, (with his legs crossed like those of an unpropitious divinity, and his hands in

his pockets!) and quietly drawing aside the window-curtains, looked out into the park.

As she anticipated, a beautiful moonlight shed its pallid lustre on the scene.

"What a lovely night!" said she. "In such weather, the ride to Edenbourne is nothing. John will be back immediately."

"I should hope so. He has been gone nearly an hour. The bay mare ought to take him there and back in three quarters. I have known the castle servants sent backwards and forwards to Edenbourne twenty times a day!"

"A *day*—but surely not at *night*?"—

"At night, when required. What are servants and horses good for, but to serve their master's convenience?—*I* have not been used to study the convenience of my servants before my own!"

"*Do* come and admire the lovely effect of the moon upon the flower garden!" pleaded Evelyn, looking pointedly forth from the window, rather than be forced to notice his unkind allusion to her often-chided solicitude for the comfort of old Susan. "The flowers look so beautiful in its subdued light!"

Still brooding over the loss of his key, Philip neither stirred nor spoke! But Evelyn was rash enough to provoke him into a rejoinder, by a further ebullition of enthusiasm.

"In moonlight," said she, raising her mild gray eyes to a sky equally unclouded, "there is something so soft,—so soothing!"—

"Soothing, perhaps, but certainly not *soft*!" retorted her husband.—"Never was epithet more misapplied. Moonlight is *hard*,—all its effects are hard."—

"How soft the moonbeam sleeps on yonder bank!" quoted Evelyn, in self-defence.

"You may cite ten thousand parallel passages of poetry, without disproving my assertion," cried Philip. "To lie, is the poet's privilege. But all who have eyes in their heads, or judgment to control the use of them, will admit that *sunshine* is soft,—or rather a softening medium,—susceptible of a thousand prismatic gradations and transparent shadows,—a thousand wavering outlines and uncertain images. Whereas the rays of moonshine are direct and steady,—devoid of colour,—reduced to simple white and black,—creating distinct and profound shadows,—the unbroken outlines of which are hard as iron!"

"I believe you are right," said Evelyn, *really* convinced; or if not, prepared to give up her opinion, on his showing. "But hark! here comes your messenger; and, thank goodness, bringing the key."

Philip concluded the "thank goodness" to be ironical. In *his* mouth, it would have been so. He made no further comment, however, being occupied in hastily unlocking the bag, tearing open the papers, and addressing himself to the perusal of those details of the "march of civilization and melioration of mankind" of which

he had spoken so plausibly; in the shape of the account of a fête he had previously seen announced as about to be given at Grandison House, to introduce into the world of fashion the most peerless of brides and bridegrooms, Sir Hugh and Lady Anastasia de Bayhurst!

To this, Mrs. Hardyng's letter of the preceding day had made no allusion. Emma was now sufficiently versed in the family history of her sister-in-law, to be certain that mere mention of the name of De Bayhurst would give pain; and though Philip knew no more than that the present baronet had joined with the last in opposition to his brother's marriage, and neglect of his widow, even *he* carefully avoided all allusion to Lady Anastasia or her husband. She had consequently the satisfaction of spelling over, unquestioned and unmolested, the account of that princely entertainment; comprising the noblest society in the land, collected under a roof well worthy to do it honour.

Lady Grandison's long series of hospitable efforts had not been thrown away. Every person of note in the metropolis seemed to have crowded around her, to shed lustre upon the public presentation of her daughter.

"Emma, too!" mused Philip, on observing the Honourable Mrs. Hardyng specified among the beauties of the night. "After all Bob used to say of Lady Grandison, he is somewhat prompt in inaugurating his wife into the set! But, as a man of the world, he is right. If such scruples were once to be consulted, *where* would they carry us?"—

And with half a sigh, he reflected that, but for his adoption of a country life in deference to Evelyn's morbid love of retirement, and deplorable want of connexion, *his* wife might have figured, as well as Hardyng's, in that brilliant assemblage; and, between her own beauty and the Askham diamonds, have eclipsed the rival brides.

Far other pretensions, however, engrossed the heart of that one of them, who had a lawful claim upon his interest. It would have been difficult to point out a happier creature than his sister. She might have been mistaken for Collins's

Cheerfulness, a nymph of healthiest hue;

and even had she been less prepared for happiness by the impulses of her own buoyant, honest nature, she must have been cheered by the joy of which she found herself the origin. Never were people so in love, as the Hardyngs with the wife of their son!

Robert was an only child; and, for years past, the sole anxiety of his idolizing mother had arisen from the likelihood that, in the worldly set in which he lived, he might become the prey of some artful girl intent on an establishment; or worse still, renounce all taste for matrimony, dazzled by the sunny smiles of some more attractive Countess of Grandison. And that he should be actually

married—unexceptionably—to a wife deserving of him—a wife who married him for love—was almost too great a stroke of fortune! She could never sufficiently mark her gratitude to his dear Emma, for having condescended to preside over the most perfect of villas, with one of the most delightful companions in the world. Such a sacrifice could not be too highly rewarded!

Emma, however, was wise enough to estimate her position at its true value. *She* knew on which side lay the obligation; and every day that tended to develop the worthiness of the Hardynges family, the pleasantness of their society, and the easy habits of their house, rendered her more conscious how dreary the existence of her own more exalted tribe!

Of men and things, and even of books, which are the portraits of both, impossible to be more *borné* than her knowledge; and her new family took the sincerest pleasure in extending her experience, wherever it could be amusing or profitable.

Released from the cares of office, and of a cheerful, affectionate, child-like disposition, Lord Hardynges was never so happy as when he could persuade his pretty daughter-in-law to drive with her husband to town; and while Bob was engaged at his office, accompany *him* in a walk to visit those public monuments and institutions, of which she knew as much as if reared at Nootka Sound!

To a man familiar only with the human mind entrammelled by golden or brazen fetters, or simple hempen cordage, to commune open-hearted with this frank and intelligent but ill-taught girl, was like turning up a furrow of virgin soil, in all its richness of fecundity. Emma's ideas were so original, her perceptions so clear, on every subject proposed she thought and felt so justly, that it was a triumph to afford her novel themes for thought and feeling. Nor did those pleasant and profitable saunterings with her father-in-law, by which he playfully pretended to render her husband jealous of his superior favour, disqualify her for shining in gayer circles. Lady Hardynges's maternal vanity was often gratified by hearing cited as the beauty of a ball-room, the daughter-in-law who was the comfort of her fireside.

“Surely dear Emma cannot have led a *very* pleasant life at home?” said she, one day, to Lord Hardynges. “She is so grateful for every trifling kindness we show her!”—

But the happiest moments enjoyed by the delighted mother-in-law were as a visitor at Eske Hill. While the two husbands proceeded together to town, (where parliament was now on the eve of re-assembling, and the whole political world in commotion,) she loved to remain with Emma;—to gossip over their work,—or sit reading under a fine old cedar tree, the noble branches of which swept the lawn.

One day, while seated thus, discoursing of nature and the picturesque, (à propos to the memorable Cuyp which had so strangely

proved the origin of their present happiness,) Lady Hardyng in enumerating among the elements of rural landscape unsightly on canvas, though beautiful to the eye, the hop-gardens of England and vineyards of France, betrayed her national partialities by according the preference to the former.

“I suppose it is owing to my Kentish origin,” said she, “that I consider a hop-garden one of the prettiest objects in the world.”

“I have heard that opinion maintained by my sister-in-law,” said Emma, “and from the same motive. And, by the way, dear Lady Hardyng, since you are so well acquainted with the De Bayhursts, surely Evelyn herself must be a little known to you?”—

“I never saw Mrs. Askham,” replied her mother-in-law, with sudden gravity. “When I married and quitted the neighbourhood, she was still a child.”

“But you must have heard of her in the family?”

“From *them* not even her name.—It was a prohibited subject at Bayhurst.”—

“And was poor Edward Saville so *very* charming a person?”—

“Most charming!”—was Lady Hardyng’s laconic answer, evidently not caring to enter into the question.

“Then surely you must have been surprised when you heard of her marriage with my brother?” persisted Mrs. Hardyng, who did not, or would not, discover her reluctance.

“I was truly glad to learn that an amiable young woman had been so fortunate. She was one of those whom one might almost fancy to have been born under the frown of Destiny, like some victim of pagan times; and I rejoice to find her settled in peace and happiness at last.”

“Yes, she is very happy,—long may her happiness continue!”—said Emma, sighing, as if she thought it less certain than she could wish. “But I cannot help sometimes wondering whence arose the strange antipathy of the Saville family towards one so young,—so inoffensive,—so pleasing!”—

The prudent mother-in-law hesitated. “Why should we talk about it, now that she is one of your family?” said she. “I should feel it an act of treachery towards her, to apprize you of circumstances you do not seem to know, and which it *might* be painful to her that you should learn.”

Emma’s curiosity was now strongly excited. “I beg and beseech of you, dearest Lady Hardyng,” cried she, “do not tantalize me by these mysterious allusions.”

“Without begging or beseeching, *your* requests, my dear child, must ever suffice,” replied her companion. “But take the word of an old woman who has lived through treble your years, Emma, that knowledge concerning those we love of which they desire us to remain ignorant, is always a troublesome possession.”

"I am answered!" replied Mrs. Hardyng. "If you wish me not to inquire further, I am content."

"Nay, as far as concerns *me*, my dear child, I have not the slightest desire for secrecy," replied Lady Hardyng. "I was thinking only of your sister-in-law!—However, lest you should form unwarrantable surmises, better, perhaps, (since we *have* broached the subject,) that I should be more explicit."

Emma resumed the seat from which she had started up, and, bringing it nearer to Lady Hardyng, under the "cedarn cover," so deliciously impervious to the summer sunshine, prepared herself to listen.

"I have often told you, dear Emma, that my father inherited the advowson of a family living on the confines of Kent, of which my brother is now the incumbent," said her mother-in-law. "The village of Holmehurst is situated three miles from the seat of the Savilles. But at the distance of two, stands Holmehurst Grange, a curious old place, belonging to Mrs. Askham's father, Colonel Monson, the impoverished representative of one of our oldest Kentish families. When I first remember him, he was a widower; and small as was his household, (consisting only of the labourers necessary for the cultivation of about twenty acres of land, and two domestic scrubs, the slaves of a housekeeper who had lived with him since the death of his wife, on the plea of having charge of his infant girl,) his hereditary income would not have sufficed to support it, but for a trifling pension accorded for extraordinary services in the Mysore.

"But however impoverished, the ancient consequence of a family which has bequeathed to the old church at Holmehurst brass monuments of the fourteenth century, and alabaster ones of the days of the Stuarts, would have commanded the utmost respect of the neighbourhood, had it not been for Colonel Monson's odious temper, and objectionable habits of life. Between the smart of old wounds, and the still more bitter pang of seeing the fine domain of Holmehurst attached to the hereditary estate of the Savilles, (between whose family and his own had festered an ill-will for centuries,) the old soldier had become almost a misanthrope.

"The plea was a good one for excluding his wealthier neighbours from his denuded house; which, dilapidated and miserable as it was, commanded a degree of interest often refused to palaces of modern invention.

"Holmehurst, my dear Emma, always gave me the idea of the moated grange of Shakspeare's Mariana; except that the western front was sheltered by a screen of ancient chesnuts and sycamores, such as I doubt whether Austria ever furnished. The structure being of stonecoped flint, like the ancient churches of Sussex, no wonder it had bid defiance to the encroachments of time, and to everything else, indeed, except the ivy creeping over its surface.

“Even the ivy, however, did not seem at ease there, as one sees it, wreathing and disporting in luxuriant growth around some noble tower. It crept meagrely and charily over the smooth surface of the flints, as if aware of being on inhospitable premises, and at any moment liable to be warned off.”

“I see the old Grange!”—cried Emma, whose eyes were fixed with intense interest on the expressive face of her mother-in-law. —“I know the dwarfed and meagre ivy you describe!”—

“Another motive, besides the churlishness of Colonel Monson, kept the better class of neighbours away from Holmehurst,” resumed Lady Hardyng. “The housekeeper was supposed to be both above and beneath her station; nay, some servant of the house, discarded at the moment of Evelyn’s birth, had circulated rumours in the village that the death of her young mother was caused by a discovery of an undue intimacy between her husband and Mrs. Carter.

“The scandal might be groundless, like most scandals reported by discarded servants; but on the strength of the prejudice it created, the housekeeper tried to impress on her master that it was his duty to marry her; and the resistance suggested by his hereditary pride to the importunities of the coarse overbearing woman, produced perpetual strife. Their quarrels transpired. Everybody knew that the infirm man was incessantly menaced by his domestic tyrant, and, if the testimony of servants could be believed, occasionally beaten; and deeply was the commiseration of the neighbourhood excited in favour of the lovely little girl, who was growing up in that dim old Grange, like the better genius of the place.

“Strangers, as they rode by, used to see the child, scarcely clothed by the scanty frocks she had outgrown, and far more richly covered by the long tresses of auburn hair overhanging her shoulders.”

“Like Selina’s now!”—interrupted Emma.

“Selina’s? Ah! *that* was the name of poor Mrs. Monson!”—cried Lady Hardyng. “They used to see her,” said she, resuming her narrative, “stationed in the old porch, like the figure of a youthful saint within its niche, watching for hours the withered blooms fluttering down from the lime-trees,—without instruction—without companions,—without comfort of any kind; and many a good mother felt grieved at heart that a little creature so promising, should be so grievously neglected.

“But the colonel was busy fighting his battles with Mrs. Carter; or lost in cheerless contemplation of a MS. map appended to the mildewed wall of his sunless chamber, which exhibited the boundary line of the estates of Bayhurst and Holmehurst, as they subsisted in Elizabeth’s time; since which, two thousand acres had been transferred from the latter to the former, so as to necessitate

the creation of the Hall, one of the finest of the fine seats erected by Inigo Jones.

“It was a satisfaction, in short, to everybody when one day Mrs. Carter, having carried off Evelyn and returned without her, the child was understood to have been placed at school;—probably an inferior one, suitable with the notions of the housekeeper and fortune of her master;—but anything was preferable to that ill regulated and dismantled home.

“Better for poor Evelyn had she never returned!—The homely establishment at Tonbridge, in which she was educated, was safer for her than Holmehurst! For as she grew up, beautiful beyond belief, and gentle and timid as you say she still remains, she had the ill-fortune to attract the admiration of Sir Herbert Saville’s eldest son.”

“*Second* son, you mean,”—said Emma, gently correcting her. “She was eventually married, you know, to Edward Saville.”

Lady Hardyng replied by tapping her on the cheek, with a smile of superior information.

“She had the misfortune, I say, to attract the attention of Sir Herbert Saville’s *eldest* son; who, as a boy, had occasionally stopped his pony to stare at the pretty child nutting on the confines of his father’s coppices. And when, at a later period, he discovered that the lovely girl, into which the pretty child had expanded, was in the habit of escaping from her dreary home, and spending the day with her book and work in a favourite nook of her father’s property, called Holmehurst Hanger, young Saville, then idling away his college vacation at Bayhurst, soon became of Evelyn’s opinion that it was the most attractive spot on the estate.

“I must describe it to you, Emma, for in my girlhood it was my favourite haunt. I used to go there on spring mornings with my brother, to gather the bee-orchises, which, wherever their fantastic blossoms abound, impart a character of mysticism to the place.—Imagine a lofty grove of chesnuts, cathedral-like in their groined arching, planted in some former century to surround a fine rock-spring, the fountain-head of a neighbouring stream. So thoroughly does their massive growth now conceal it from view, that only when the sun is vertical do its beams attain a spacious tank, cut in the solid rock around the spring, with a single subterranean issue for its waters; and as since the return of the colonel from his campaigns not a gun had been discharged on his grounds, all the song-birds of the neighbourhood seemed to have taken refuge in the Hanger. It was there one heard the first nightingale of the year,—the first cuckoo,—the last robin.—*There* climbed the squirrel unmolested,—there shone the glowworm in the moss!—

“Throughout the neighbourhood, the Holmehurst tank went by the name of the Fairies’ Bath. But my father, an antiquarian of some research, declared it to be a *Piscina*, created by the Francis-

can friars who formerly possessed a priory at Holmehurst, to secure fish for their fast days. No matter its origin!—The waters were not the less glassy, nor the bright-barred perch that darted through them, less pleasant to look on.—

“At one angle, indeed, where the green turf clothing the alluvial soil upon the margin had by degrees crumbled into the tank, forming a deposit which Colonel Monson’s over-tasked people were at no pains to remove, there sprang up a tuft of reeds and water-flowers, that seemed to flourish with especial triumph, as if proud of having conquered a place in their native element; over which, in the month of May, hovered those bright varieties of ephemera, which delight in water-flowers and reeds.—Imagine it, at such a moment, with the noble chesnut-trees throwing up their pale cones of blossoms overhead!—No wonder they called it the Fairies’ Bath.—It was really a place of enchantment!”

“You must take me to see Holmehurst Hanger, when we are able to accept Mrs. Scotney’s hospitable invitation,” said Emma. “I long to be acquainted with every spot you loved and frequented in your youth.”

A smile of pleasure brightened the face of Lady Hardyng, as she resumed her narrative.

“Since you enter so fully into my picture, dearest child,” said she, “you will have no difficulty in fancying how much the shy recluse of the Grange was annoyed, on finding herself beset by Hugh Saville, in a haunt, which, though situated only a quarter of a mile from her father’s roof, was solitary as the desert. For the first few times, she bore his intrusions in silence; hoping by her coldness to render each the last. Still, he persevered. (You have seen Sir Hugh, dear Emma, and can judge from his countenance the dogged obstinacy of his nature!) He persevered, I say; and was finally guilty of insults so atrocious, that, to avoid him, she became a close prisoner in the house so distasteful to her. When they *did* chance to meet, the young lady of the ruined Grange was seen to pass without notice the heir of Bayhurst Hall.”

“A romance,—positively a romance!” cried Emma: who, even if not warmly interested in the heroine, would have been captivated by Lady Hardyng’s low-voiced, but impressive manner of narration.

“The surly young man, however, had no leisure to brood over his grievances. He was sent upon his travels. War rendered the North of Europe inaccessible. But his father despatched him to the Mediterranean; where he had a brother high in naval command, with whom young Saville sailed for Sicily, then the headquarters of the exiled Neapolitan court.

“Neither time nor travel, however, effected the smallest change in his attachment. When he returned, the following summer, his first inquiry was for Evelyn.—Alas! another of the family had found

his way to the Fairies' Bath!—Edward, a gay soldier of the Guards, handsome as his brother, and possessing the charm of graciousness in which the elder is so deficient, had arrived at Bayhurst, surrounded by all the *prestige* of his heroism of Valenciennes; and towards *him*, poor Evelyn did not evince the repugnance inspired by his rival. Probably because he had approached her as a being so fair and gentle deserved to be approached.

“Not to weary you with the details of a love story, Sir Herbert was soon maliciously apprized by his elder son of the danger incurred by the younger; and being at issue with the unfortunate man whose property had passed into his possession, (concerning certain title-deeds, by virtue of which Mrs. Carter was instigating the Colonel to attempt the recovery of a portion of his estates,) he lost not a moment in interdicting all further communication between the young people.”

“In spite of which, of course, they met again; and were again denounced by that hateful elder brother?”

“Precisely!—The story was related to me by my sister-in-law, on the spot that originated the mischief. Seated one summer's day upon the short green turf beside the Fairies' Bath, she told me how Colonel Monson, frantic on learning the offence offered to his daughter, had despatched an insulting letter to Sir Herbert, for which, satisfaction could not be exacted from the infirm old man. In short, after they had all abused each other disgracefully, in a correspondence instigated by the malice of the vindictive Hugh, coercive measures were adopted towards the young people, such as are pretty sure to end in an elopement.”

“Poor girl,—poor Evelyn!”—

“*Poor* indeed—with such a substitute for the authority of a mother, as that infamous Mrs. Carter. The woman not only favoured her escape, but soon afterwards accomplished her own object, by inducing the outraged father to make her his wife. Colonel Monson did not long survive an act of which he was ashamed; though the widow artfully protested that it was his daughter's misconduct which hurried him to the grave.

“Fortunately for poor Evelyn, a sum of five thousand pounds had been secured her by her mother's settlement. For the Colonel bequeathed everything in his power to his widow; and Edward Saville survived his ill-omened marriage little more than a year.”

“But is it possible that no one could be found to intercede with Sir Herbert for his widow and orphans?”

“*Who* was to counteract the influence of the son that never left his side?—Broken in health and heart, no one approached the old man but Hugh;—no letter reached his hands but through those of his son. Even if Edward addressed his father in his last moments, (as most people surmise to have been the case,) the application was doubtless intercepted.”

“That horrible Sir Hugh!”—

“So convinced was my brother of the fact, that as pastor of Holmehurst, he did his utmost to procure an interview with the old man. But his son was not the person to be counteracted by a country parson; and had an unanswerable pretext for preventing the interview, in the assurance given by his father’s physicians that emotion of any kind must be fatal.—As if any emotion could be more painful than the conviction of Edward’s ingratitude!—Edward, his dear promising Edward,—the pride of his soul,—who had lived to disobey him, and died without a token of repentance?”

“Sir Herbert expired then, in his turn, a victim to the malice of his son! From the moment I saw that man, I disliked him; how little supposing I should ever acquire reasonable grounds for the prejudice! Surely his conduct must have rendered him unpopular in his neighbourhood?”

“As unpopular as is compatible with a fortune of twenty thousand a-year, which he receives without reckoning, and spends with equal liberality. Aware of being no favourite, he gives no hold to his enemies. Had people the means of raising a cry against him, they would seize it readily. I sometimes fancy that his change of name originated in a desire to get rid of the painful associations connected with that of Saville!”

“I wonder,” cried Mrs. Hardynge, revolving in her mind this complication of interests,—“whether he has of late held any communication with Evelyn, or ever experienced an interest in the orphans of his brother?—How I should like him to see Selina!”—

“My son, who, by the wish of his uncle, has been kept ignorant of these details, and knows only that Ned Saville made a love match in opposition to his father’s authority,—told me, a few years ago, that he was certain Sir Hugh cherished an unhappy passion,—he knew not for whom.”—

“Strange that my husband should not have guessed the truth!”

“Robert never liked him well enough to guess about him; and at that time, was unacquainted with your sister-in-law. To you, however, darling Emma, I may venture to confide one other secret connected with the case. Though the acquaintance of my family with the Savilles originated in my father’s residence at Holmehurst, the intimacy between Sir Hugh and Lord Hardynge was produced by his application for my husband’s professional opinion respecting the ‘legality of marriage with a brother’s widow,—issue of the first marriage surviving.’”

“You conclude then that the monster had courage to propose a second time to Evelyn?”

“I am persuaded he had courage to *meditate* it. But as he sought the opinion only a month or two before the death of Lord Askham, Mrs. Saville was probably already engaged to your brother.”

“What would I not give to know the truth!—Refuse him she

must!—But, do you suppose,” cried Emma, interrupting herself, “that Lady Grandison is aware of these particulars?”

“If she were, they would have created no obstacle to the marriage of her daughter,” replied Lady Hardyng. “But not another word, dear Emma! I hear the grating of wheels under the portico; and here come your husband and mine, before whom I do not wish to renew the subject.”

She forgot how many pleasanter topics of discussion were likely to present themselves between Robert and his wife!—She forgot the eagerness with which Emma was in the habit of addressing herself to her oracle, for news from abroad, or court, or city! Like the Siennese peasant whose son was, in her lifetime, elevated to the papal chair, and whose mind became bewildered on finding herself mother to one entitled to remit sins and confer canonization, the infatuated young wife was convinced that the hand in which her own was pressed so fondly, possessed the power of grasping a wreath of laurels wherever it listed, and obscuring the fame of the greatest heroes

where'er they shone or shine,
Or on the Rubicon or on the Rhine.

King George might select Mr. Perceval to keep *his* seals, but in Emma's opinion, the safety of the country was mainly invested in the zeal and intelligence of the Honourable Robert Scotney Hardyng, member for Edenbourne.

CHAPTER XVI.

Difficili bile tumet jecur.

HORACE.

He rag'd and kept as fierce a coil, as
Hercules for the loss of Hylas;
Forcing the valleys to repeat
The echoes of his wild regret.

HUDIBRAS.

The public mind was just then agitated by one of those periodical spring-tides, which it is customary to call a crisis; i. e. the flux and reflux of the political ocean, accelerated by official attraction.

In the present instance, the commotion of the waves had long been rising. The war declared against France in 1793, by the short-sighted policy of the Tories, had forced the French nation to concentrate itself into a military republic; instead of remaining a commonwealth weakened by factions, and sure to be crushed by the Briarean arms of civil war.

Yet for the sake of England, better far had the French been left to prey upon each other, like the Kilkenny cats, even to utter extermination. For the termination of their commingled elements of mud and gore had, alas! engendered an Alexander, who had already crossed the Granicus; and Great Britain, in whose blunders and obstinacy originated the creation, ran no small chance of falling a victim, like Pygmalion, to the re-action of the work of her hands. The spirit of Talleyrand and strength of the new Emperor, united, were putting the British lion sorely on his mettle.

Conscious, however, of standing in a position that admitted of no mediary measures, and that it must fight—*like* a lion,—or skulk dishonoured from the field, it put a good face upon the matter,—flourished its mane and tail,—and roared with such prodigious energy, that, (to borrow the words of Bottom,) “it did any man’s heart good to hear him;” the groundlings exclaiming in ecstasy, —“Let him roar again,—let him roar again!”

But our bravado arose neither from the consciousness of strength, nor, from what is next in power, the consciousness of weakness. Had England found courage to recognise the greatness of her foe, she would have condensed her forces to oppose a noble front to his menaces, instead of scattering her shot, in attacks upon the four quarters of the globe,—Alexandria,—Constantinople—Copenhagen—Buenos Ayres; under sanction of which dispersion of national strength, the giant assumed his seven-leagued boots, and pursued his victorious march across the Vistula, not deigning to turn round and renew his defiance to the *nation boutiquière*, whose sensibility he declared to be invested in her counters, till he took his victorious stand upon the Treaty of Tilsit.

There perched the triumphant eagle, flapping its wings! A fraternization between the new Emperor of an old kingdom, and the feeble autocrat of a mighty empire, for the avowed purpose of dismembering Europe, and creating kings to govern it, as coolly as if manufacturing Guelphic knights, or pricking for sheriffs, was a feature in universal history which, however it might be pooh-poohed by the country gentlemen and the Morning Post, was somewhat startling to the Council of Ten of that Venice viewed through a magnifying glass, the capital of the House of Hanover: accustomed to inflate itself like the ambitious frog among the sedges of the Thames, into the proportions of a bison, and fancy its croak Olympian thunder.

Whigs and Tories had been successively called upon to put a shoulder to the wheel of the state waggon, sticking in the mud amid the pelting of the pitiless storm. But the efforts of the former were neutralized by the disfavour of royalty. Like the Marquis of Adorno, who, when called upon as governor of Elvas, to declare whether the French army, about to traverse his province of Tras los Montes, would be received as friends or foes, replied “We are

unable to resist you as foes, or entertain you as friends. I have the honour to be your most obedient humble servant,"—George III. seemed to consider himself almost more severely visited in the ministry of Fox, than in the death of Pitt!

Already, therefore, by the will of Providence and his majesty, the country was restored to the jurisdiction of the war-makers. War was, in fact, becoming its normal condition; and, little to the credit of its patriotism, parliament was far too bewildered by party-strife, to contemplate with becoming gravity those fatal combinations, which led to continental blockade, all but fatal to British industry, and the more than Runic sacrifice of millions of human lives.

While humbly kissing hands for the restoration of its salaries, the new ministry renewed the old pledge for "the extermination of France!" But they promised it as the alchemist promises the philosopher's stone to some half-ruined neophyte; by exacting the cession of his last doit for the accomplishment of the great work. Like Palissy, the inventor of enamelling, who, after exhausting his money and fuel, thrust his household goods into the furnace, rather than that the fire should be extinguished which was to consummate his invention, the Tories entertained little scruple about the means to be employed in satisfying the frightful appetite of the bloodhound they cherished as a pet.

Nor were the Whigs less grasping in their ambition of power. A hurried banquet on the sweets of office, had not satiated their hunger; and of more than five hundred members present at the opening of the new parliament, more than half were actuated by motives which dispose a party to contemplate the state of the country through the wrong end of the telescope; and substitute that petty policy which is the surest cement of an administration, for the broad principles of statesmanship which are as applicable to the minister as the mightier details of government,—as the trunk of the elephant is organised to uproot a forest-tree, or pick up a pin. As well, however, attempt to construct a hovel out of the gigantic masses of Stonehenge, as expect permanency or coherence, in a cabinet formed of elements so intractable.

With the country, meanwhile, both parties were equally unpopular. Facts spoke for themselves more eloquently than the oratory of Lord Howick or the plausibility of Spencer Perceval. "*L'universale non s'inganna!*" and the eyes of the people, though easily dazzled by a halo of triumph, see pretty clearly on a cloudy day. There was little in the state of the empire to reconcile it to the exorbitancy of its taxes, or depression of its commerce. The hero-market was looking down. Sir Arthur Wellesley was occupied in bringing in bills for the suppression of insurrections in Ireland, instead of laying suckers for a grove of laurels, more sacred than those of Blarney, or Dodona; and how was John Bull to fore-

see in him the redeemer of our national fame,—destined to acquire a palace and princely revenue, in reward for restoring the Bourbons to a throne, from which Marlborough had acquired a palace and a princely revenue, for endeavouring to pull them down?—

Among those who contemplated the affairs of the nation with the hopeful eye of his own sanguine nature, was the new member for Edenbourne. Though his heart bled from every wound of his country, his spirit, like that of a staunch boarhound, was roused into greater fierceness by the smart; nor could the practised experience of his father induce him to believe that the vessel of the state had more to fear from sunken rocks, than from those ostensible reefs against which he had armed his courage.

The pacific little borough of the Askhams would have shaken in its shoes, had it surmised how valiantly its new champion was prepared to do battle against those who, having “cried havoc and let slip the dogs of war,” experienced some difficulty in harking them back to kennel.

Lady Grandison, on the other hand, released from the cares of chaperonship, and finding her house and time hang heavy on her hands during the honeymoon of her daughter, had seized upon the interregnum to attempt the creation of one of those political circles, by which, in Paris, she had seen women of a certain age endow themselves with attractions exceeding those of youth and beauty.

It is true that, to accomplish the presidency of such a senate, the Aspasia should have a Pericles at her feet, or the Mrs. Masham a canopy of court favour over her head; whereas, neither Mr. Perceval nor Queen Charlotte was likely to amplify the consequence of Grandison House, either by protection or anathema.

But the Countess was one of those persevering masterly spirits, which contrive to make bricks without straw; and by her reckless combination of opposite influences, through personal friendship with the Prince and Lord Grandison’s turf connexion with the Duke of York, she created a neutral territory, where the Whigs, sorely in want of a rallying point, were content *en attendant mieux* to assemble their forces. As the chief business of the French Exchange is carried on at Tortoni’s, the *frondeurs* transacted theirs under cover of the ices and *sorbets* of Grandison House.

Who now so happy as the restless Countess! Like a sea-bird luxuriating in the coming storm, she was ever on the wing, conveying wars and rumours of wars, between Carlton House and Camelford. No treasury messenger ever worked half so hard, or was ever more ignorant of the intelligence assigned to his hand. As she assumed, however, all the ludicrous consequence of La Fontaine’s “*âne qui porte les reliques*,” the foolish women of her caste, who saw her perpetually whispering in the ears of bigwigs, and heard her emit mysterious nothings worthy of a king’s speech, en-

tertained little doubt that, if the woolsack became obnoxious to Lady Grandison, the woolsack was in danger!

Was it likely that, with such projects in her head, and such thunderbolts in her hand, she should have much interest to spare for the new *ménage* of the De Bayhursts?—No!—She had done her duty by her daughter in matching her with twenty thousand a year; and it was time she should do her duty by herself and the country.

It is true that scarcely a day passed without her bursting like a whirlwind into their house, to create dismay by the torrent of news she rattled forth, without choice or discretion, like coals shot into a cellar. But she was beginning to be a little out of conceit with her son-in-law. Not because dear Stasy's cheeks were grown so pale and thin; for the change was lost upon her. But because, having undergone a relapse of the party fever by which she was attacked during the ascendancy of Bob Hardyng, she had no patience with a man of De Bayhurst's fortune, who, after wasting 30,000*l.* in an unsuccessful contest for his county, was pitiful enough to abuse parliament for the remainder of his days, as a luxury beyond his means.

No hope of persuading him to think otherwise! A man who could stand out against the ties of nature and his own conscience, was not likely to succumb to the influence of a mother-in-law. Still less to *tomber en quenouille*, and be governed by a wife whose education had been limited to netting purses and trilling canzonets, and by whom the business of life was understood as comprised in matching a ribbon to her complexion, and adjusting a trimming to a gown. Anastasia knew nothing in this world, except how to look pretty, which no one understood better; and if she were now learning, in addition, how to feel miserable, it was unsuspected by the fluttering mother, who, seeing her installed in so fine a house with such splendid family diamonds, had a right to suppose that she had not a wish unaccomplished.

“Is *that* your beautiful Lady Anastasia?” was Emma Hardyng's involuntary exclamation to her husband, on meeting her, for the first time, at the fête at Grandison House, which so excited the envy of Philip. “Why I could cite twenty women in London who are ten times as pretty!”

But before they met again, at a fête at Carlton House, given soon after the meeting of the new parliament, the interest of Mrs. Hardyng had been so excited in the interim by the startling narrative of her mother-in-law, towards everything connected with Bayhurst, that the paleness and reserve of Lady Anastasia, which she had before thought vapid and tame, now struck her as the result of depression. In spite of her fine diamonds and point lace, Emma suspected her to be a miserable creature.

The intimacy between their husbands rendered an introduction inevitable. But in presenting his wife to the sister of Philip Ask-

ham, De Bayhurst fixed his eyes upon her face, as though to search her feelings to the heart's core; and instead of leaving them altogether, as Hardyng had already done, to improve their acquaintance by a little womanly chit-chat, he stationed himself sternly at their side, as stiff and out of place as the man in armour at a civic show. Emma saw in a moment, that, by the sullen baronet's order in council, Eske Hill was in a state of blockade.

They met frequently,—almost nightly; their families being comprised within the same political *cordon sanitaire*: and the more studied the coldness of Sir Hugh de Bayhurst, the more was she inclined to improve her acquaintance with his wife. Was it pity,—was it terror,—was it the species of magnetic emotion we experience in presence of the perpetrator of some great crime, or the victim of some terrible torment?—Impossible to say!—Emma herself could not account for it. But after prolonged contemplation of the fine features of Sir Hugh, and trying to trace in them a likeness to her little step-nephew, she could never refrain from addressing a few gracious words to his wife, as if in atonement for the evil feelings rankling in her mind towards the brother-in-law of Evelyn.

The topic she selected was naturally suggested by her brother's former intimacy at Grandison House. Unapprised by her husband of the attachment he had so incautiously revealed to its object, *she* entertained no suspicion that Philip was more interesting in the eyes of Sir Hugh de Bayhurst's bride than the Duke of Norcliffe,—Lord Robert de Lacy,—or any other of her former admirers; and seldom addressed her in her husband's presence without some allusion to the domestic happiness of Eden Castle!

No wonder, therefore, that she had occasion to tax Lady Anastasia's cheek with paleness!—No wonder she found cause to confide to Lady Hardyng, that the beautiful young wife of Sir Hugh actually trembled in his presence!

One night, however, towards the close of the season, as they were standing together in the crush-room at the opera, waiting for the carriage till they had exhausted all other topics of conversation, Emma having expressed her regret that “Philip was prevented joining them in an expedition to the Highlands by the approaching confinement of Mrs. Askham, an event which at present absorbed all his thoughts,” the emotion of Lady Anastasia became so evident, that Mrs. Hardyng determined never again to recur to Eden Castle.

“She is so attached to that horrid husband of hers,” said Emma, when recounting the scene to her mother-in-law,—“that she can bear no allusion to a person so obnoxious to him, as the widow of his unfortunate brother.”

She was even rash enough to advert to the subject to Philip,—to whom her husband had charged her to write again, on the subject of her Highland expedition.

“I tried to extract a civil message for you, last night, from your friend Lady Anastasia,” said she; “but I obtained nothing but blushes; and the times being past when these could mean anything on *her* part, or be acceptable on *yours*, they would be scarcely worth transmitting, had I metal more attractive to append to Robert’s message.”

Alas! the idea of being deeply regretted, or even kindly remembered by his London friends, was, on the contrary, only *too* acceptable! Little did Helen Middlemore, who had calculated so closely the comparative advantages of a match with her cousin Philip, De Bayhurst, and Lord Hardyng’s son, surmise, as she sat permanently benched beside her peevish chaperon, that the man last upon her list, as enjoying a paltry allowance and *roturier* distinctions, was the only one of the three who had afforded no reason to his wife to repent her choice, or suppose his own repented!

Evelyn had already ceased to deceive herself. Before the end of the summer, the unruliness of her boy had brought down such constant punishment, such perpetual murmurs, that, rendered peculiarly susceptible by her situation, all she could do was to retreat from the frowns of Philip into her own chamber, and comfort herself by solitary tears.

To borrow the forcible eloquence of Souvestre, she perceived that her husband “*ne cherchait plus la vie du même côté, et avait adopté de nouveaux dieux; et elle se débattait contre cette désolante vérité. Semblable aux mères qui réchauffent les cadavres de leurs fils à force de baisers, elle pressait pour ainsi dire dans ses bras cette affection morte, et prenait pour des preuves de vie, les battements de son propre cœur. Car l’apparence n’avait pu changer aussi rapidement que les sentiments! La voix de son mari gardait un peu de l’accent d’autrefois,—le geste quelque chose de la caresse. Les tendres habitudes étaient demeurées dans le langage, sinon dans le cœur; tristes reflets d’une lumière évanouie, mais qui empêchaient de croire à la nuit!*”

Desirous to find some pretext for the moroseness of Philip, she excused his preoccupation of mind, by the anxious responsibilities of a landed proprietor in times so untoward. His position in the county was very different from that maintained by his father. The independent farmers of the neighbourhood rejected him as living on sufferance at Eden Castle; a superior kind of agent, provided with inadequate means for keeping up the place. From *him* the poor expected no oxen roasted whole, no overflow of old October.—Of the present Lord Askham’s proceedings, enough had transpired at Edenbourne to satisfy them that the respectability of the family was no longer immaculate;—a perception that transpires at every pore in the deportment of the little towards the great. Hats were no longer lifted to Philip in the market-place with the same deference as of old; a mortifying change which he blindly attributed to

his marriage with one whom they had seen poor and unconsidered, —the tenant at will of a wretched tax-gatherer's cottage!

The idea was wormwood to his pride; and more than once, while riding home from Edenbourne through the part of the park where Elshie was ranging, after perusing in the London papers some brilliant account of Bob Hardyng's speeches in parliament, or the fêtes of Grandison House, he could not forbear exclaiming that he had sacrificed his prospects in life;—that he was too young to be encumbered with the family of another man;—that the little Savilles and their mother would have been happier and better off at Edenbourne Lodge, than misplaced as they were at Eden Castle. He had trifled with his own happiness. He had missed his vocation in withholding his hand from Lady Anastasia Grandison!

Among the mistakes of his honey moon, in forcing the children out of their place,—which renders *all* children disagreeable,—was that of insisting that they should breakfast with him and their mother, because such had been their custom at Eastfield, (which *they* were beginning to call “*dear* Eastfield,”—an epithet highly offensive to Philip;) and the consequence was, that the meal seldom passed without some interruption to conversation on the part of the impetuous little Edward, certain to produce a sullen silence on the part of his stepfather.

One morning, however, when the careless boy had been guilty of one of those table negligences so offensive to persons of nice habits, unaccustomed to children,—such as overturning the creamjug on the tablecloth, or streaking it with a trail of honey,—Philip Askham burst suddenly into such an explosion of rebuke, that even the spirited boy looked frightened.—Pale as death, Evelyn secretly resolved that they should never breakfast with her again.

Vexed with himself, and embarrassed by their awe-struck looks, Philip abruptly announced his intention of riding after breakfast to a cricket-match, to be held that day in the park of one of their more distant neighbours, Mr. Lechmere of Carlton; and the young offender, who had been long promised that he should see this match, was about to put in his claim, when Selina, after watching in anxious silence the quivering lip of her mother and lowering brow of “papa,” contrived to divert his attention and lead him gently away.

“Do not ask!” whispered she, when they were out of hearing. “You have displeased him again; and when angry, he will perhaps be cross with mamma.”

“Cross with mamma?—Cross with my own darling mamma? I should like to see him!” cried the little hero of seven years old, with his face in a glow.—“I will go back and tell him how changed he is, and how much I hate him!”—

“Hush, hush!” cried his sister, throwing her arms around his

neck, and stopping his mouth with kisses ; — for *my* sake, — for mamma's, do not be naughty !”

And while still engaged in pacifying her brother, Mr. Askham luckily mounted his horse and rode off to the cricket-match.

It was a burning day in July,—the very weather to ripen corn and discords. The deer were clustered panting round the trees, as Philip progressed through the park ; and on approaching Elshie's favourite pasture, the pony cantered saucily towards him, tossing its mane and tail, as with an air of defiance.

Even after he had reached the Chase, whose beautiful expanse of verdure might have been expected to refresh his heated frame, the sight of some magnificent oaks marked with a white cross for the autumnal axe, brought so painfully to his mind the tenor of a letter he had received from Verdun the preceding day, as only to increase his exacerbation.

Percy's letters, indeed, were now seldom of a pleasant nature. Always new difficulties to be relieved,—always fresh complaints of his “ confounded luck !”—As if “ luck” ought to have attained any ascendancy over the destinies of the owner of Eden Castle !

His last epistle, however, afforded wholly new grounds of annoyance.

“ The people here,” wrote Lord Askham, “ are the most cursed screws on earth ! The cormorants remind me of the vultures gathered together over the carcase in Scripture : and bound as I am to the stake, no means of evading their beaks and claws !

“ I often wonder, my dear Phil, how I was ever so confounded an ass as to decline my father's offers ! For though, with *my* views, I could not have represented his borough, what more easy than to get into parliament, on my own account ; and by working hard for the Whigs, obtain for the family, when they were in office, an English peerage ?—For, at present, what *are* we in the country ? Nothing ?—and nothing shall we always remain, now that *I* am a slave to Boney, and *you* to the caudle-cup !

“ You ought to be in the House. You ought to be representing Edenbourne, and doing your part towards the consolidation of our family interests. It makes me sick when your letters potter over the beauties of Eden Castle, as Simprems or old Hacket used to do when they dined with my father ! We do not come into the world, *fratello mio*, to babble of green fields. Who is to provide for the children I bespoke of you, or for the young ones I left in the school-room, who will soon want a helping hand to eke out their scanty fortunes ?—Master Henry, the pride of Torydom, is safe, I presume, under Uppingham's protection. But Claude, Richard, and Edmund, naturally look to *us* ; and I feel the care of their advancement to be a portion of my inheritance. Dick, my mother writes me word, must needs be a soldier. Edmund, I should be glad to hear of in the diplomatic career which you disdained. Who knows, but he

might prove the mouse to nibble a hole in the net which holds in captivity that majestic lion, his elder brother!"

Now Philip had hitherto accustomed himself to fancy that, his younger brothers and sisters being under the guardianship of his mother, with whom he held such frigid communication, he was exonerated from all interference with their destinies beyond the payment of their fortunes. He had not duly contemplated the duties devolving upon him as, virtually, the head of the family; and on perceiving how much Lord Askham expected of him, in return for the noble provision he enjoyed, his selfishness recoiled from the cares thus accumulated on his head. *Two* families to be provided for by his exertions, without adverting to the one in prospect!

Still lost in the brown study produced by these unsatisfactory considerations, he found his horse standing against a gate, forming the limit of the Chase in the direction of Carlton, one of the least frequented routes in the neighbourhood;—to which was appended a lodge whose services were so seldom in request, that the care of it was confided to a deaf old woman and infirm old man,—decayed labourers of the estate.

The moment old Nelly Knowles discovered, by the use of Philip's pass-key, that one of the Eden Castle family was on the road, she hobbled out, mumbling and curtsying: and on recognizing "young Master Askham," her delight exceeded all bounds. Concluding that she had some petition to make, or complaint to prefer against the forester or keepers, for curtailing her faggots or invading her little garden with their ferrets, Philip stopped his horse to listen to her grumblings.

But to his surprise, all was grace and benediction!—She only wanted him to "thank my lady for the money and clothes."—

Nothing doubting that Evelyn's benevolence had been exercised towards the aged couple, Philip was passing on, when a parting admonition from old Nelly to "be sure and tell Miss Susan, when he wrote, that her old man was purely, and had quite got rid of his rheumatiz," induced him to make further inquiries.

It was by Mansfield Sreet, after all, that the succours had been supplied! Nelly, it appeared, was a protégé of his sisters; and the good-natured girls, whose hearts yearned, even in London, after their old home, had addressed themselves to Mrs. Hacket to convey their contributions to the lodge.

A scarlet spot appeared upon either cheek of Philip as these facts became developed. He was extremely displeased. The act of charity of his sisters was at once an interference with his rights of benevolence, and an attestation of the estrangement which had established itself between them and his wife. Though she had been "noticed" at the castle, as Mrs Saville, as "Mrs. Askham" she had clearly become non-existent. To execute a commission at

Edenbourne, Lady Askham and her daughters were forced to have recourse to the vicarage!

As he pondered on all this, the road appeared too hot to hold him. It was a thrilling day; one of those days of golden sunshine which the second childhood of Turner delights to caricature; when floods of light come pouring down upon the earth, till a fiery cataclysm seems to inundate the face of nature, and the song of the grasshopper sounds like a cry of torment. Not more radiant the memorable Cuyp in Mansfield Street, than the landscape around him! But there was no standing against a glow that seemed to extort a scorched smell from the herbage. The eyes of Philip were dazzled. His heart was ill at ease—

———Ardentis ab ore
Scintillæ absistunt : oculis micat acribus ignis!

Before he had progressed four miles towards Carlton, which lay at double the distance, so fevered was he by the heat of the day and the chafing of his own temper, that he found himself in no mood for the cricket-match. He was thoroughly out of sorts.

Easy however to return,—return at a foot's pace through the plantations. He had informed Evelyn, at parting, that he should partake of the early cricketing dinner of the Lechmeres, and return in the cool of the evening. But with his wife and home, who is not entitled to be capricious?—

No woman in the world but has experienced the relief of having occasionally a day to herself, for the discharge of some feminine duty, or the enjoyment of some feminine pleasure, without hindrance or molestation. Especially such as have cross husbands! Evelyn, who was now approaching an event which forcibly recalled the dreary moment of her Edward's birth, when, though little more than a girl, she was already a widow, clinging to life only for the sake of that Selina, who was the crowning pledge of her wedded love,—*poor* Evelyn felt that the moment of her husband's absence at Carlton would be favourable for the discharge of several minor duties, which had of late hung heavy on her mind.

Previous to her marriage with Philip Askham, she had destroyed a variety of objects long cherished as bringing personally before her the image of her lost husband. Still, a certain number had been reserved and set apart to become hereafter the property of his children. The first letters she received from him when a girl at Holmehurst, and, above all, those denouncing the nefarious conduct of his brother, were still in her possession.

In the event of her accouchement proving fatal, these ought not to fall into the hands of Philip or the children; for she already foresaw that this brother,—this uncle,—this fearful Sir Hugh de Bayhurst, was likely to be the only protector remaining to the orphans in case of her decease.— There was Sir Erasmus indeed.—

But Sir Erasmus was old : and had perhaps already repented his generous offer. At all events, it would be safer to cancel the evidence of what De Bayhurst had been, in the utter uncertainty of what he might be required to be.

She had accordingly brought from its obscure nook, and placed upon the table in her dressing-room, a curious old Flemish desk, full of traps and contrivances—her mother's of old ; which had accompanied her from Holmehurst, and contained, besides the letters in question, the few trinkets she had laid aside as belonging to Selina.

At any moment, it would have been a trying duty to examine those papers. But now, connecting the task with the injury she had done to her children, and her sad presentiments concerning the occasion for their arrangement, she was completely overpowered. As she threw herself into a chair, staggered by the host of agonizing images they conjured up, tears burst in torrents from her eyes.

The table was strewn with letters. Beside them was an open medallion, containing a miniature of her dark-eyed Edward in his regimentals,—once dearly, *dearly* treasured,—which now appeared to fix reproachful glances upon her face.

There lay his pocket-book,—the pocket-book in which, during his last illness, he had jotted down a few of those striking thoughts, whose radiance so often transpierces the fissures of decaying nature.

There lay the lock of raven hair she had shred from his brow ere it was shrouded for the grave. She had brought forth all,—*all* her hidden treasures,—or rather the treasures hidden for her children ; with the intention of sealing them in a packet, addressed to Selina, to be preserved for her till she was of riper age.

Contrasting the manly face before her, which in life had never met her eye—even in poverty and pain,—unbrightened by smiles of affection,—with the one she had that morning beheld, distorted by passion, uttering imprecations against her careless boy, it was impossible to repress the tears consecrated to the memory of the dead.

A low knock came at the door. It could not be the children ; for she had despatched them to the garden to play, with injunctions not to disturb her. It must be Susan,—old Susan ;—who had now often to consult her about the nursery preparations in progress. Hastily drying her eyes, therefore, she rose to unbolt the door. The good woman would not dream of approaching the table where her mistress was employed ; but after obtaining an answer to her questions, would leave her to the completion of her task.

But the door being thrown open, it was Philip himself who made his appearance ;—Philip, returned, hot, cross, and weary, from his ride ; who, without noticing anything unusual in her manner

and appearance, proceeded straight to the table, and threw himself into the chair she had quitted!

He started!—All was seen at a glance.—All was felt at a blow!—The inflamed eyes of Evelyn,—the ghastly paleness which now overspread her face,—the picture,—the hair,—the letters,—the relics over which she had shut herself up to weep unmolested:—ay! weep with the child of another man struggling into life beside her heart!—All, all were before him!

The feelings which had been festering in his bosom, came forth at a gush. The sentiments which, faintly suspected, had occasioned her such bitter pain, were poured with the harshest vituperation into her ears. She had guessed rightly.—He did, indeed, bitterly repent his marriage!

“He saw that he had always been an object of repugnance to her. She had overcome her loathing, only to provide a home at his expense for the children of the man she still adored!”

And having uttered these cruel words, he seized the medallion from the table, and crushed it ferociously under his feet;—then, flinging himself anew into the chair, covered his convulsed features with his hands, and burst into an agony of tears!

That night, the life of Evelyn was despaired of. The following day, an untimely confinement placed another life in danger as well as her own. The infant whose birth had been at one moment so fondly looked forward to by Philip Askham,—the sturdy boy bespoken by his brother to become the heir of their ancient line,—was a wretched, puny creature, thrust into this breathing world before its time, and inducing every member of the family to pray for its release.

It was only little Selina, who stealing unobserved into the nursery, bestowed on the brow of the unwelcome babe a kiss of sisterly affection!—

CHAPTER XVII.

[C'est au nom de leur sexe, déshérité de tout droit d'examen et de contrôle, que j'appelle à toutes les mères de porter les ciseaux de la réforme dans cette éducation de broderies et de colifichets, de babil et de petites bonnes grâces, frivole et par conséquent funeste, qui énerve l'âme, qui détrempe tout ressort, et qui voue à l'infériorité.

RAYMOND.

Τὸν αὐτὸν κόσμον δὲ τρόπον καὶ οὗ χρυσία.

One evening, a few days before the close of the session, which the tardy assembling of parliament rendered unusually late, Bob Hardyng, finding there was no question of interest before the House, determined to dine at Brookes's instead of Bellamy's;—and was crossing Saint James's Park, at the leisurely pace befitting

a sultry day in August, when, lounging on a bench in the Mall, he caught a glimpse of Sir Hugh de Bayhurst.

Yet surely he was mistaken?—What should the Baronet do there, at a moment when the fashionable world was in the Ring, and the domestic world, at dinner?—

It *was*, however, the envied husband of Lady Anastasia; who, on descrying him, turned his back, as if for concealment; on second thoughts, rose and advanced to accost him; and finally, on learning that he was bound for Saint James's Street, fastened upon his arm to bear him company.

Thus closely brought in contact, Hardynges had an opportunity of noting the ravages which the cares of a married man had already wrought in the countenance of his companion; till he ceased to wonder at his choosing a quiet half hour to refresh himself in the pure air of the Park. The cadaverous hue of De Bayhurst served to verify his suspicions that to be son-in-law to the fussy, worldly Lady Grandison, might be no improvement to a man's temper. Of his own movements, meanwhile, he saw fit to give an explanation.

"I am going to dine at my club," said he, "as becomes a disconsolate widower,—for I am alone in town. Emma is gone down to Eden Castle. Her brother, as you may have heard, has been very near losing his wife."

"I understood she was out of danger?"—replied Sir Hugh, in a hoarse voice. "Mrs. Hardynges, I conclude, will shortly return to town?"

"No,—I join her next week at Edenbourne. She has had a trying time of it.—They have saved, thank God, both mother and child. But it was a near thing!—Philip would never have got over it had the event been fatal."

Sir Hugh remained silent; so silent, that his constrained manner recalled to the incautious Hardynges what he had totally forgotten,—his family connexion with Evelyn:—his *family* connexion alone, however;—for, as Lady Hardynges had intimated to her daughter-in-law, he was ignorant that any other had ever existed between them.

A little indignant to find him thus callous to the danger of his brother's amiable widow, Hardynges chose to push the subject home.

"And, by the way, if she had died, poor soul," said he, "*you* also, my dear Sir Hugh, would have been a sufferer."

"It is many years since I saw Mrs. Askham," replied the baronet, in a husky voice.

"Yes,—I am aware that you hold no communication with her. But that fine boy of hers, your nephew,—(at present, I conclude, heir presumptive to your title and estate?)—you would scarcely have left *him* in the hands of my brother-in-law?"—

"Has Mrs. Askham a son?" demanded Sir Hugh, with pretended ignorance, and quivering lips.

“One of the finest little fellows I ever beheld!—His mother adores him!”

The saturnine Baronet seemed to shrink under every fresh blow inflicted by his remorseless assailant.

“Very much attached to him, is she?”—said he, in a tremulous voice.

“Ay, more a great deal than would please *me*, were I her husband, —seeing that his name is Edward, and that he is said to be the image of your brother!—However, the birth of Philip’s boy will give a new direction to her feelings.”

De Bayhurst evidently did not choose to hear, for his next observation regarded the prorogation of parliament.

“Young Askham has made a very brilliant *début* in the House, has he not?”—said he, sagaciously foreseeing that the surest way to divert the attention of Hardyng, was by piquing his vanity as a public man.

“Why yes; I believe his party are proud of it!” said he; “for Lord Uppingham goes about crowing like chanticleer when he picked up a jewel instead of a barleycorn.—A barleycorn, however, would have been a deuced deal more to the purpose!—

Non fumum ex fulgore, sed ex fumo, dare lucem
Cogitat, ut speciosa, dehinc miracula promat.”

“Flash or no flash, I suspect that Henry Askham’s success will end in more than smoke,” replied De Bayhurst. “His speech on the abolition question made a great sensation with the public.”

“With the public, perhaps. But do you suppose it influenced the division?—What *I* call a powerful speech is one that converts a minority into a majority!”—

“I doubt whether a speech of Chatham’s ever did *that*!”—observed De Bayhurst.

“I am certain it will never be effected by one of Henry Askham’s—or even of his patron’s, Lord Uppingham!—By the way, have you seen Deighton’s caricature of them, as Launce and his dog? Henry, led in a string, and turning round to wag his tail at his patron, is really delicious!”—

“They are not at the trouble of getting up political caricatures against so young a member, unless a great deal is expected of him,” said De Bayhurst, drily.

“Perhaps not! But you must have seen his speeches, as I, God wot, have had the good fortune to *hear* them: and I only ask you, in common candour, whether you ever read anything more tame, more spiritless, more common-place!—Nothing original, in principle, or theory, or style, or delivery!—The copy of a copy!—The paraphrase of a translation!—The dilution of what was weak before!—Lord Uppingham’s small beer made a little flatter by being broached in the Lower House!”

"I have a shrewd guess," observed De Bayhurst, "that, in times to come, small beer will have the best of it! We have drunk out our champagne; and, even had we not, into what a state of things has its effervescence betrayed us! Trust me, the country prefers even the smallest beer to a beverage whose sparkling conveys no nutriment, and leaves only the heartburn!"

"But do you mean to tell me," cried Bob, with growing earnestness, "that the sententious plausibility of a Henry Askham,—the priggish, owlsh gravity with which he utters his effete truisms,—will ever rivet the attention of an enlightened House of Commons?"

"Certainly! if your enlightened House of Commons perceives that it has weight with the country. I, you know, am a country gentleman," continued he, with a grim smile; "and you may, therefore, try the question upon me, as Molière did his wit upon his house-keeper. I promise you that plain truth, clothed in plain language, brings conviction to *my* mind, far before the finest oration, studded with classical quotation, and coloured with historical allusions. I, and still more the farmers my tenants, do not want to hear what was done by the Stuarts or Tudors,—the Greeks and Romans. We want to learn what the Guelphs will do for us, and whether their ministers will let them."

"Yet surely historical precedent——"

"Historical precedent and classic philosophy should form the *basis* of a man's political studies; but he has no more business to intrude them on the House, than the elements of syntax, which are no less essential to his oratory."

But Hardyngge shrugged his shoulders with an air of compassion, as if he had never felt certain till then that the country was in danger.

"It requires time for a young member to acquire the confidence of the House, unless, like Pitt and Fox, hereditarily established," persisted Sir Hugh, as they reached the bottom of St. James's Street. "But, though little in the habit of prophesying, I venture to predict that, at no great distance of time, Henry Askham will stand in the foremost rank of his party."

Bob Hardyngge replied by a bitter laugh.

"Is such, said he, "the decree of Grandison House?"—

"I see you have become less assiduous in your visits there, since your marriage," retorted Sir Hugh, "or you would be aware that, so far from yoking myself to its opinions, I seldom set foot within its gates."

"We were married in one and the same hour and church," observed Bob Hardyngge, more in his natural tone, "and seem to have adopted one and the same policy towards our mothers-in-law! I confess, however, that one of my reasons for eschewing Mansfield Street is a thorough dislike to the company of that political automaton

wound up by Lord Uppingham, who, you tell me, is to become the future lawgiver of Europe. And now, good-bye, for I conclude you are bound for Grosvenor Square?"

"I need not hurry myself," replied De Bayhurst, slightly shaking hands with him at parting. "After Lady Grandison's example, Lady Anastasia's carriage is usually among the last in the Ring. We dine at the hour my father used to sup."

Little did Hardyng surmise, as he proceeded up St. James's Street, cursing in his heart the stolidity of country-gentleman-kind,—how deeply the seed he had accidentally let fall, while alluding to Evelyn and her children, was fated to take root in the mind of his companion.

Sir Hugh de Bayhurst was a man of peculiar temperament, —so peculiar among his class and countrymen, that people were apt to retrace it to the Spanish blood of an ancestress who had married into the family at the time a Prince of Spain espoused that English Queen whose religious persecutions are said to have raised the price of faggots. For, like British wine, the jealousy and vindictiveness of native growth are of a mawkish quality, compared with those of Spanish importation;—and there was something of the genuine Borachio flavour in the hatred of Sir Hugh.

The predominant passion of his life,—his love for Evelyn Monson,—had been embittered into a feeling compared with which all human interests and sentiments appeared cold and colourless. Reared in a family almost as systematic as that of Eden Castle, and tormented by jealousy of his younger brother, as Philip of his elder, and in a degree consonant with the intenser nature of his passions, like Philip he had taken refuge from the dreariness of home in the illusions of a devoted attachment.

But the affection nurtured in such an atmosphere as the family of either, could not be of gracious growth. We remarked long ago that the Cupid of Philip Askham was born a cripple; yea, so halting in its nature, that no sooner was he satisfied of possessing the whole heart of Evelyn, than he ceased to value the treasure intrusted to his care.

The passion of De Bayhurst on the other hand, savage as his own nature, had been stimulated by disappointment almost to frenzy. The days are luckily past for poison and the poniard. Our civilized century is too much in awe of the quarter sessions, for battery or assault. But malignity is not the less malicious for the cooling of its venom; and the brother-in-law of poor Evelyn awaited in patient bitterness the ripening of his revenge!

He had traced every step of her blameless life. He had hoped that the poverty which made her wretched, would make her criminal, and that its crushing results would place her wholly in his power. But when he found the young widow, unpampered by early prosperity, accommodate herself without a struggle to the

narrow sphere of Eastfield, and fulfil with pious care the line of duties which her sense of equity had judiciously traced out,—like Satan at the gates of Paradise, he almost despaired!

The assiduities of Philip Askham revived his anticipations of mischief. That so stiff-necked a family as the Askhams would consent to the union of their son with a poor and encumbered widow, was most improbable; and he had little doubt that Evelyn, compromised by so dangerous an intimacy, would be left to shame and remorse.

When Philip, on his first arrival in London, assumed the daredevil attitude of a man of pleasure, De Bayhurst could scarcely contain his delight at the notion of the grief his departure from Eden Castle must have inflicted, and the still deeper anguish likely to result from his infidelity.

No pursuit, no occupation, interfered with his gloomy contemplations. The momentary excitement consequent on the levy of his yeomanry corps during the invasion panic, soon subsided; and cruel reminiscences of other days were perpetually brought before him by those walls which had witnessed the last moments of his father embittered by Edward's desertion, and the distant woods of Holmehurst which had witnessed his own rejection.

The neighbourhood was hateful to him. Having persuaded Colonel Monson's widow to dispose of the Grange, only that he might avenge himself on the pride of the Monsons by cutting down the ancient grove of trees, annexing the denuded land to one of his farms, and letting the old mansion to tenants of the lowest grade, the quaint façade and twisted chimneys thus laid open to notice, served only to attract greater attention, and to vex his eyes and grieve his heart every time he repaired to the parish church.

For to complete his exasperation, came the irritating reflexion that, at his death, the child of Evelyn must resume possession of the old place! Bayhurst was entailed on him.—The title also must be Edward's.—It was fated that Banquo's issue should succeed him on his throne!—

This was not to be borne!—He must marry; he must become a father; heirs of his own must interpose betwixt him and his enemy; or all he had suffered and projected would have been projected and suffered in vain.

Such were the views which induced him to seek an introduction to Grandison House; and there, the very first object that met his eye was Philip Askham,—the man so dear to Evelyn,—the man by whom Evelyn was beloved; and but for whom, he might perhaps have eventually obtained a place in her regard! When he reflected on the triumphant hours enjoyed by that man at Eastfield,—on the injury he had inflicted on Evelyn's reputation and his own hopes—his hatred and disgust were beyond control!

It was the very moment when Lady Grandison, deceived by Lord

Middlemore's hoaxing as to the prospects of his cousin, had marked down Philip Askham as a good match for Lady Anastasia; and what the world calls a desperate flirtation was going on between them. Even after Hardyngge had usurped his place in the favour of the Countess, Philip remained attached to the side of her daughter. The triflers of the set, who had never heard of Eastfield and Mrs. Saville, decided him to be passionately in love; and appearances certainly justified the presumption.

In a moment, it suggested itself to De Bayhurst that he might retaliate upon him by whom he had been a second time supplanted, the cruel disappointment of his hopes; for, rich in all that could recommend him to Lady Grandison as a son-in-law, he had only to address himself to *her*, to secure protection to *his* suit.

And so it proved.—The Countess was at his feet, the moment he spoke of placing himself at those of Anastasia.

In the prosecution of his courtship, however, Sir Hugh de Bayhurst experienced a feeling for which he was wholly unprepared. The youth, the beauty, the ingenuousness of Lady Anastasia Grandison disarmed his malice and gave a new colour to his thoughts. He discovered that the world might have something pleasanter in store for him, than revenge upon Evelyn Monson. Better dismiss her from his memory; and commence with this younger, fairer, and kinder Eve, a new paradise on earth!

For Lady Anastasia received him graciously,—more than graciously. Her manners, tinged by the coquetries of her mother's Parisian levity, encouraged the advances of every stranger;—and in the present instance, the pretendant to her smiles, who boasted so many recommendations of person, rank, and fortune, and who might consequently pique the wavering Philip into a proposal, was intitled to every distinction she could bestow.

Mistaking her April smiles for summer sunshine, De Bayhurst—prepared to warm in its genial atmosphere his long-chilled heart and soul,—resigned himself once more to the cheering delusions of hope! On one occasion, indeed, a suspicion glanced momentarily into his mind that he had mistaken his object,—that the attachment he had imputed to Philip, was on the side of Anastasia.

But an appeal on the subject to Lady Grandison procured him one of those plausible explanations in which her diplomatic duplicity excelled. He was given vaguely to understand that Mr. Askam having been refused by her daughter, the coolness between them was produced by resentment on the part of Philip, and prudence on that of dear Stasy; while as to Hardyngge, *his* intimacy in the family had arisen from his Pylade-ship with Philip Askham, while the latter was vainly trying to make himself acceptable at Grandison House.

Sir Hugh de Bayhurst accordingly gave himself up to his new prospects, with the happy confidence of a child. On his guard against

the mistrustfulness of his own nature, he closed his eyes wilfully against conviction. It was essential to his happiness to believe in the sincerity of affection of one who had pledged herself to become his wife!

On the eve of the accomplishment of his happiness, her paleness, her tears, her all but despair, were speciously attributed by her mother to the pang of quitting a house where she was adored; and the man, so long a prey to self-deception, was again deceived. Nor was it till on the very steps of the altar, when, as he stood awaiting his bride with his eyes fixed upon her face, he distinctly saw her start of recognition on beholding Philip Asham,—her sudden faintness,—her total change of deportment,—that his mind became fully enlightened.

Till that moment, Anastasia had commanded her feelings;—till that moment, the unhappy girl had been sustained by the strong spirit of resentment produced by having been trifled with and forsaken for another;—or perhaps by the hope of securing a kind protector,—a quiet home. But on beholding Philip Askham before her, come doubtless to triumph over her misery, her very soul shrunk within her; and lo! the searching eye of her bridegroom detected its despair!—

Too late for redress!—The prince stood there with his gracious smile,—the bishop with his open book,—the parents, who had been like *him* deceived,—the crowd, with their avidity for a catastrophe. If he recoiled now, he should become the butt of the newspapers—the jest of the town.—And so, the fatal “*I WILL*” was tremulously pronounced,—and another couple made miserable for life!—

It was not, however, till they reached Bayhurst, which of late he had permitted himself to repeople with such happy hopes and illusions, that the sense of wretchedness thoroughly unmanned him. Too long accustomed to give way to his feelings to control them in deference to her by whom he had been deceived,—too long the arbitrary lord of that princely place to suffer even a painful position to obtain the mastery,—he did not hesitate to tax Lady Anastasia with her treachery, and upbraid her with the heartless perjury of her marriage vow!—

Paralyzed by hearing for the first time in her silken life the accents of unkindness, the poor girl had not self-possession to manifest the truth; that, having done her utmost to overcome a preference called into existence by the unprincipled trifling of its object, she had nerved her courage to embrace new duties, in hopes of giving a new impulsion to her feelings; and that she was solely and religiously intent on becoming the best and most dutiful of wives.

All this was within her; for nature had gifted her with generous instincts and sufficient powers of mind. But dear Stasy had not been trained to examine her heart, or give utterance to its sug-

gestions. All she could do was to weep and tremble; and thus confirm the worst suspicions of her husband; who, having rushed from her presence in the blind excitement of passion, betook himself to Holmehurst Hanger, the birthplace of his evil passions,—and involved in a common curse and vow of vengeance, Evelyn, Philip Askham, and his unhappy wife!—

Never was honeymoon so sad as hers!—Her youthful spirit was withered on the threshold of life. Hitherto, Anastasia had seen of the world only its pastimes, heard only its flatteries, imbibed only its incense. And now, she stood for ever in presence of an enemy!—That stately house, so often pointed out by her mother to her bridal ambition, appeared a huge and menacing prison. The personal beauty of her husband, proverbial at Grandison House, now assumed the terrible expression of an avenger. His face had become awful in her eyes as the painful compositions of Spagnoletto and Zurbaran, gracing his picture gallery!—

The frivolous nature of her education rendered her, in short, a ready victim to the grasp of the ruthless man to whose jurisdiction the concatenation of errors, which we call evil fortune, had submitted her destinies. Awed by his frown, she felt fifty times more guilty than in fact;—for the boundaries of right and wrong were not distinctly engraven on her mind.—

To open her heart to her mother for the disclosure of her sorrows, was expressly forbidden her. Nay, in so heinous a light had her disingenuousness been placed before her by De Bayhurst, that she regarded it as beyond the reach of even maternal forgiveness. “She had deceived her parents,—she had deceived every body,—she had broken the bonds uniting her with kith and kin. All that remained for her was to discharge the remaining duties of life in silent repentance.”

On arriving in town, however, secretly resolved to throw herself on Lady Grandison’s protection, to interpose between her and her offended husband, she found herself already superseded in her mother’s heart. The Countess was in no mood to listen to her tribulations. The rabid contagion of party spirit was frothing from her lips. Whenever dear Stasy addressed her in a minor key, she was bidden to rejoice and be merry, for that it was impossible the ministry could stand. When tears stood in her eyes, she was congratulated on the numeric strength of the Whigs. Lady Grandison could talk only of the grand gathering at Willis’s,—the meeting at Brookes’s; and, after her first visit to Grandison House, Lady Anastasia returned broken-hearted to her gorgeous home,—as a bird might feel which, having taken flight from the maternal wing, sought in vain for warmth and refuge in the forsaken nest. In gaining that cruel husband, she had lost her parents.

And to what could she turn for comfort?—On what had she to fall back?—The poor child possessed little religion—less philoso-

phy.—Beyond the formal observances of the Protestant faith, no sense of piety had been impressed upon her mind. She was terrified at the idea of a jealous God, as at the face of her angry husband.—Heaven was too far off for the apprehension of a daughter of Grandison House!

Reading had always been treated as a task; and for her former occupations of embroidering muslin, netting purses, and practising Italian ariettes, her mind was no longer sufficiently at ease. The only alternative that presented itself was reckless diversion. Her husband opposed no obstacle; for he was glad to get her out of his sight. “Providence bestowed a great gift upon us,” says Voltaire, “when it made us frivolous; for we lose, in fluttering, the consciousness of pain.” And in frivolity, (bereft, like Voltaire, of higher consolations,) she had squandered away her happiness. Piqued by the loss of a single ill-played game into staking her whole existence on the ensuing chance, she had lost, and become a bankrupt for life!

But if happiness were gone, pleasure remained. If her home were joyless, there was the opera, the ball-room, the park; Vanity with her looking-glass, Pride with her peacock’s train! Of her bridal lot, the sparkling jewels, the rich lace, the garlands of flowers, at least remained. If her heart was void, her *trousseau* still occupied the polished wardrobes of her fine new house; and devoting herself to the rival attractions of diamonds or sapphires,—white satin or blue,—chip hats or silk,—she tried to create an interest in life by striving to eclipse the young Duchess of Norcliffe,—out-dressing the pretty actress Lady de Lacy,—or throwing into the shade the unpretending Marchioness of Uppingham, or her *piquante* sister, Mrs. Hardyng.

Such were the triumphs which had been expressly pointed out to her by Lady Grandison, as the reward awaiting her accomplishment of a good match!—

It was not, however, the intention of Sir Hugh that the delinquent should thus readily escape him. Retributive justice demanded that she should suffer, in expiation of the wound she had inflicted on his already bleeding heart. For of all the afflictions with which Providence could have visited him, that of finding his wedded wife attached to another, and that other the man who was possessed of the affections of Evelyn,—demanded far other atonement than the altered looks and nervous tremors of his bride.

She had made him wretched. She had made him ridiculous. For the incident at their wedding, which had so startled *him*, was doubtless the fable of the clubs; and it was too much that she should derive sufficient consolation from the lustre of her diamond necklace or the number of her satin gowns.

Since he could not revenge himself by seeking a quarrel with the object of her secret passion,—(Philip being safe in domestic se-

clusion at Eden Castle,)—it was on *her* his vengeance must fall; and though brutal violence may be a sin against the conventions of society, the daggers that are spoken and not used,—the moral poison, distilled drop by drop in a chalice of tears,—are within reach of every well-conditioned husband and wife!

The power of embittering her life and Evelyn's by the adoption of his little nephew, accidentally suggested by Hardyng, was as the discovery of a hidden treasure! It would be a stroke of twofold retribution. The wife who had deceived him, the woman who had scorned, should be involved in a common punishment. And the world would be on his side. The assertion of a right of guardianship over the orphans of his brother, would pass for an act of virtue.

Meanwhile, unsuspecting of the affliction preparing for her, the sufferer at Eden Castle was progressing slowly towards recovery. From the moment of Mrs. Hardyng's arrival, a sensible improvement had taken place; and, after four days spent in hourly expectation of Evelyn's dissolution, her horror-struck and haggard husband was apprized that the fever was subsiding; and that he was reprieved from a life of remorse, as the murderer of the gentlest of wives.

Nothing had transpired of the origin of Mrs. Askham's attack. All seemed to have occurred in the ordinary course of things, and was attributed to the heat of the weather and the delicacy of an enfeebled constitution; nor was the nature of Philip sufficiently expansive to induce him to entrust, even to Emma, the secret of his inexcusable barbarity. To *her*, perhaps, least of all; for of her clear-sighted sense of justice, he stood somewhat in awe.

So sudden, indeed, had been the seizure of Evelyn, and so rapid the progress of her danger, that that fatal cause of all,—those letters and tokens of love so long secretly and sacredly treasured,—remained exposed on her dressing-room table, throughout her time of peril. Any one in the castle might have perused them, had any one at that moment entertained an interest apart from the existence of the woman so universally beloved.

But when her safety and that of his child was announced to him, one of the first impulses of Philip, while retracing the progress of what had occurred, was to collect the letters,—the hair,—the wedding-ring,—seal them together in a packet,—restore them to the old desk,—and leave them, thus deposited, till Evelyn's perfect convalescence.

And what would he not have given for the power of replacing among them, in its original condition,—the miniature,—the shattered fragments of which afforded such cruel proof of the violence of his jealous madness!—All he could do was to collect and secure them apart; hoping that the still partially-preserved ivory might suffice to enable some artist of skill to produce a nice likeness.—Instead of still desiring the obliteration of all trace of Edward Sa-

ville from the face of the earth, he was fully conscious of the crime he had committed in seeking to disinherit those poor children of the little that remained to them of their father.

Admitted, at first, only for a few moments at a time to the presence of the exhausted Evelyn, and aware of the danger of renewing her emotions by reverting to the past, as a matter of conscience, he sealed his lips. However eager to throw himself on his knees by the bed-side and implore her pardon, he contented himself with fervently kissing her hand; and by the time she was able to converse with him, it was plain that her resolution was taken,—that from *her* would proceed no allusion to all that had occurred. She had already afforded to Emma an explanation calculated to divert suspicion. It would be cruel to defeat the precautions thus kindly devised.

With consideration equally delicate, he strove to demonstrate his repentance without express allusion to the past, by gifts to the children,—by bringing them in his arms to her bed-side,—by the restoration of all their former enjoyments. The first day her condition was such as to justify his leaving her, Edward, mounted on Elshie, was the companion of his ride.

Do what he would, however, he could not bring himself to experience a fatherly interest in the puny little creature prematurely forced into the world by his intemperance; over whom old Susan lifted up her eyes compassionately to heaven, while comparing it with Master Edward, “the beautifullest baby that eyes were ever set on;” and Dr. Boswell’s announcement of the improbability of its eventual survival was heard without an expression of regret.

But no sooner was Evelyn sufficiently herself to think and act, than even Philip was forced to desire the reversal of the decree. In the heart of a mother, there is always hope;—for the eye of a mother, there is always beauty. Mrs. Askham looked confidently forward. The child would improve—it would become dear to others as it was already to herself.—No one could have the cruelty to wish the little creature released, when they saw how fervently the mother who had suffered so much for its sake, prayed for the preservation of its days.

By the time Hardyng was enabled, by the prorogation of parliament, to rejoin his wife, all had resumed at Eden Castle the customary routine, and there was no drawback on the cheerfulness of his welcome. But on finding Emma’s services no longer needful, he began to renew his projects for their Highland tour.

“You are now able to discharge your nurse, my dear Philip,” said he, as they sat together over their wine on the evening of his arrival;—“and I consequently claim my wife.—We are expected in half a hundred hospitable mansions; and my father will be affronted if we disappoint the friends to whom he has written to announce us.”

Philip, in the interest of Evelyn, pleaded for another week.

“Another week, in the grouse season, counts for a month!” cried Hardyng. “I can’t afford it, out of my small income of twelve in the year. But if you want to see more of us, why not let us come back to you in October, and help you shoot your pheasants?—Horace Trevor and Walter Lesly told me they were coming to join you in October.”

Philip, who saw in this free and easy proposal only the desire to escape the dulness of Eden Castle when unenlivened with company, could not but acquiesce. But he determined that Hardyng should never again have occasion, in *his* house, to complain of a tête-à-tête.

To his voluble companion, however, the stiffness of his assent was imperceptible. Bob was full of the happiness of rejoining his charming wife,—full of the conflicting interests of the recent session,—full of the vicissitudes of the Austrian campaign,—full of the stirring interests of life. *He* was not so self-absorbed as to have susceptibility to waste on idle punctilio.

“We have done all that time would allow,” said he, (in reply to the charge in which Philip’s ill-humour took refuge, that “the new parliament seemed likely to achieve as little as its predecessor.”) “We have shown the Tories that Shylock is whetting his knife, against another session. To have made a precipitate incision, and bled the victim to death without obtaining our pound of flesh, would have exposed us to condemnation. It is only heaven-born ministers who are privileged to violate all law and abjure all pledges, without forfeiting their respectability.”

“Still,” argued Philip, “I suspect that many of our liberal members will feel somewhat shamefaced on confronting their constituency.”

“*You are my constituency!*” cried Bob, laughing, “and I promise you I look you in the face as unabashed, as though you were your grandsire cut in alabaster! Admit, my dear Philip, that the country gentleman is a most unreasonable beast!—The country gentleman expects countries to be conquered for him, without powder or shot, and cities to be reduced, without pickaxe or scaling-ladder. The country gentleman is convinced, like a child, that the vehicle he travels in is standing still, and that the hedges are moving. The country gentleman would make every step in public life a stride; but when things are jerked out of their places by the movement, complains of the breakage. The country gentleman would fortify the state with his own turnips, and then wonder at being eaten out by the sheep. The eye of the country gentleman being organized, like that of the bull, to magnify proximate objects, he fancies himself able to overbellow an army t’other side the channel; but succumbs to the *taureador* who, having acquired colossal

proportions by approaching him, flings a mantle over his head. The country gentleman—”

“Quarter, quarter!” cried Philip, good-humouredly filling his glass;—“and allow me to propose, in my turn, the health of the young member. The young member is one who, like the great pyramid, covers a whole province by the magnitude of his shadow. The young member is a sophist so enamoured of the subtleties of abstract politics, that he will leave an insurrection unquelled, or the budget unopened, while he is carping at a definition or rounding a period, or selecting examples among the Lacedemonians. The young member parries the tangibilities of a treasury return by quotations from Dante; supports a local militia bill by invoking patriotism as the pulsation of a nation’s heart, and when cheered by the lovers of claptrap, fancies he has emitted an argument. Bewildered by the acclamations of his chairing, (a ceremony founded on the *fêtes des fous*, which were imitated from the frenzy of the *Bacchanales*.) the young member fondly fancies himself a demigod. Harpooning his whale in a vulnerable part by addressing himself to the prejudices of John Bull, rather than his understanding, the young member computes his consequence by that of the monster he has conquered;—forgetting that in public shows, the giant is ever led by a dwarf.”

“Hear, hear, hear, hear!”—interrupted Robert, with a hearty laugh. “A palpable hit,—a capital portrait!—Henry Askham to the life! Yet this vapouring young member sir Hugh de Bayhurst ventures to point out as the leader of the new era!”

Philip was silenced. Not because Hardyng had so cleverly transferred to the shoulders of his brother the ridicule intended for his own; but because piqued by the allusion to De Bayhurst.

“By the way,” cried Bob, who, having accomplished his object, was content to change the subject,—“do you know that you are about to have a very pleasant new neighbour at Hexham?”

“Has one of those horrid girls, then, picked up a husband at Bath?”

“I know nothing about horrid girls! The lessee to whom I allude is a broth of a boy!”

“Hexham about to be *let*?”—cried Philip, in some surprise.

“Not *about* to be! The deed is done!—or rather, as the pragmatical young member would say, ‘signed, sealed, and delivered!’ Sir Robert de Lacy told me, three weeks ago, that his brother had been looking at a place in your neighbourhood; and cross-questioned me about the sporting.”

“Of which you knew nothing.”

“And Emma, to whom I applied for information, still less! She has often told me, indeed, that the only good seat or shot in the family, is her sister Susan. However, I answered Robert de Lacy with the cool decision characteristic of the *ignoramus*,—that the

sporting near Edenbourne was execrable. Not because I thought the family too rollicking to be of much advantage to the morals of our little corner-cupboard of a borough; but because, assured, that a few hundred brace of partridges more or less, would make no difference in Lord Lynchmore's intentions. All he wants is a pretext for absenteeism. In spite of his reputation as a red-hot patriot, the great object of his life is to get away from the fire-raisings of Lynchmore Castle."

"I do not remember Lord Lynchmore. Is he a married man?"

"Very! At least his wife considers herself immeasurably his better half—and if not as good as two, she is as big. Their eldest boy is just gone to Eton,—another reason assigned by Sir Robert for their project of settling in England; though it is pretty plain that white boys rather than Eton boys are at the bottom of the move."

"And when do they arrive here?" inquired Philip.

"Immediately. People were sent down, a fortnight since, to put the place into habitable repair."

"Impossible to be in better repair than Hexham!" cried Philip.

"Mrs. Gwatkin is as rich as a Jew, and as neat as a quaker."

"Pho, pho! By habitable repair, I mean that they have provided themselves with chaise longues and lounging chairs,—reviews and pamphlets,—hock and champagne,—and all the other elements of comfortable life. When we visit you in October, my dear Philip, we will straight-way to Hexham, and amuse ourselves famously at Lynchmore's expense!"

"I am not acquainted with Lord Lynchmore," said Philip, stiffly.

"Not know Lynchmore?—I thought every-one knew Lynchmore,—the best fellow in the world!—Hospitable as an Arab!—Perhaps one might call him cracked, had he not happened to be born in that part of his Majesty's dominions called Ireland. I once spent a glorious month with him at Lynchmore Castle, and my head ached for the six ensuing."

"A pleasant prospect, truly, for his quiet country neighbours!"

"He won't let you be quiet long!—You will find him a great acquisition in this dull neighbourhood!"—

It did not please Philip to hear the neighbourhood called dull by any one but himself. But though the quizzing of Bob Hardyng had often, both at Eton and Eske Hill, caused his "fell of hair to bristle," it was not in his own house he could pick a quarrel with his brother-in-law.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It is only the intelligent who appreciate trifles;—the trivial exaggerate—the solemn underrate them. Dull must be the sight which fails to perceive great events and great actions, but it requires sagacity to detect the indications afforded by the bubbles on the stream.

FOREIGN REVIEW.

The mellow autumn came, and with it came
The promised party to enjoy its sweets;
The corn is cut,—the manor full of game,—
The pointer ranges, and the sportsman beats
In russet jacket, lynx-like in his aim;
Full grows his bag, and wonderful his feats.

BYRON.

October made its appearance in its customary suit of yellow leaves; when Edenbourne, true to its vocation as an utterer of base platitudes, was guilty of the observation annually repeated in county chronicles and parsonage-parlours, on occasion of the first frost of the year;—"that the winter could not fail to be a severe one, for never were the hawthorns so charged with berries, or the flocks of starlings so numerous."

And with the haws and the starlings, and sere and yellow leaves, came Sir Walter Lesly and Horace Trevor,—two popular men about town, who, having nothing else to bestow upon their friends, were very liberal with their company; ranging the country throughout the autumn months,—seeking whose venison they might devour, and whose pheasants bring down.

Unable to stand the fire of their cross-questioning at White's concerning the merits of his preserves and of the neighbourhood at Eden Castle, without vouchsafing to two fellows with whom his friendship dated from Eton, something of a general invitation, they not only rendered it specific, but booked the engagement on the spot; and it was no small relief when the Hardynges, who had concerted to meet them soon afterwards, made their appearance refreshed and excited by their Highland tour.

The restored health of Mrs. Askham, luckily opposed no further obstacle to the gaieties of the visit; and there was every prospect of an amusing little party. Edenbourne was in its best looks and temper; for, according to the prediction of Bob Hardynges, the Lynchmores were already stamped current, as a prodigious acquisition to the neighbourhood.

A new family, arriving without antecedent obligations to shackle their choice of society, and irresponsible to the piepowder court of county jurisdiction, enjoys peculiar advantages; people like the

Lynchmores being able to break through, like cobwebs, a variety of restraints and prejudices, which to a family enrooted in the soil, like the Askhams, are infrangible as a chain cable. To them, it was useless for the demure Vicarage to quote precedents, (act xxiii. of Gwatkin. IV.) The Countess of Lynchmore cared no more for what had been done by her predecessors at Hexham, than for what was doing in her servants' hall.

The skill of a fast-witted and many-handed London upholsterer having rapidly converted the roomy old house into a first-rate country residence, instead of squinting obliquely at Eden Castle, it was now fully entitled to look its aristocratic *vis-à-vis* boldly in the face—its own having in the mean time been made as white as Pierrot's. The change of complexion from white to red, said to have been effected in the mulberry by the blood of Pyramus, can scarcely have been more striking, indeed, than the transformation of that of Hexham Hall from red brick into white stucco.

In place of the meagre, dronish establishment of former days, all was now spirit and activity. The stagnant water was suddenly forced into a *jet d'eau*! The old head-keeper who, under petticoat government, had taken such care of the preserves, that the pheasants were dying of plethora and old age, and the hares had become too gouty to run, took to his bed on learning that the hunting-stables of the defunct Squire Gwatkin, mildewed by the desuetude of five-and-twenty years, would not half suffice the stud of the new lessee, and that brick and mortar were already in requisition.

Even the kitchen was nearly demolished, for the introduction of new stoves and ranges, too complicated to be inserted otherwise than the apple in the dumpling; and both the French cook and groom of the chambers gave it as their opinion, that the Hall, in its unregenerated state, must certainly have been inhabited by cannibals!

Edenbourne, on the other hand, upraised its eyes to heaven, on hearing a whisper that the income of Dr. Hacket would be improved, were he to change places with either of the fastidious worthies in question; and took the liberty of whispering in its turn an inquiry why prodigalities were to be adopted at Hexham Hall, such as would have been condemned as sinful under the ancient dynasty of Eden Castle?—It had *too* long rehearsed the creed inculcated by the Vicarage, to “honour the king and respect the Askhams,” to be tempted into immediate recantation.

But on discovering that, for every five pound note expended in the borough by its patron, five times five were tossed into its lap by the thriftless Irish Marquis, it owned itself open to conviction, (the only point on which it *was* open!)—and muttered something about “marching with the times.”

Dr. Boswelt, the canny successor of Simprems, shrewedly suspecting that the French cook and French wines of the Lynchmores would insure a prodigious increase to the black doses licensed to be drunk on their premises, went about as fast and far as his gig could carry him, circulating laudations of the new family:—"charming people, combining the graces of the new school with the virtues of the old." And, as it was pretty plain that the outgoings of Eastfield, Edenbourne Lodge, and the house of Gwatkin united, had not equalled, in a month, a single week's disbursements of the Chancellor of the new Hexham Exchequer, a vote of favour was passed *nem con.*

There was every probability that, by another season, the peal of bells heretofore dedicated to the exclusive honour of the Askhams, would be set ringing for the births, marriages, and comings of age, of the family of an Irish Marquis.

Philip Askham, though forced to join his voice to that of the multitude, would have been better pleased had the place remained empty.—Competition with the opulence of the Lynchmores demonstrated, for the first time, the inadequacy of the means supplied for the maintenance of the castle in its pristine dignity. His magnificent house seemed suddenly to have outgrown his establishment, like a schoolboy his clothes; and the bare wrists and naked ankles that *would* peep out, looked poverty-struck!—His favourite groom left him, to become a helper at Hexham; and the head-gardener hinted that, unless more assistance were afforded him, he should desert in his turn. Even the old pony chaise which Evelyn found so useful, was declared by Philip unfit to pass the precincts of the park, now that the well-appointed phaeton of Lady Lynchmore stirred up, every day, at Edenbourne, the dust and envy of the Market-place.

Had the good-humoured Lord Lynchmore surmised that anything in his possession gave pain or offence to living mortal, he would probably have found means to dispense with it. For his nature being melting as that of a Newington peach, he could not bear the temper of even an enemy to be ruffled. His jovial countenance and hearty laugh might have driven a whole legion of blue devils out of the county; and so genuine was his good-will both to be amused and amusing, that his worst jokes enjoyed a success often withheld from the more pregnant wit of worse natured men.

The only person who did not enter readily into his humour, was the Countess. In the outset of their married life, when Lynchmore was a dapper little fellow, and she a graceful girl renowned for her slenderness of waist and delicacy of complexion, his pleasantries had been triumphant with *her*, as with his bottle companions. But they had laughed and grown fat together, till there was something in the figure of his lordship that sadly recalled to mind the figure

of eight, while the rose now predominated over the lily in the full-blown features of his wife.

While smarting under her perception of the change, she had overheard, or fancied she overheard, Lady Grandison whisper to the young Duchess of Norcliffe, the word "*vulgar*," just as one of Lord Lynchmore's hearty laughs startled from its propriety the vestibule of Buckingham House! The mere suspicion of such an imputation kept her sleepless for a week.—But it opened her eyes to the critical nature of her position. She saw that, under their cruel redundancies of drollery, amplitude, and complexion, and her own deficiency of pedigree, it required all her efforts to maintain them in the odour of aristocratic sanctity.

But though the joviality of her lord, who enjoyed life like an Irish chairman, was a sore grievance, nature *would* sometimes have its way;—and his odd whims and pleasant fancies often betrayed her into her former approving mirth, as if no such word as vulgarity existed in the language.

Nothing, however, could be more edifying than her self-reproachful mode of drawing up into additional dignity, after such acts of weakness!—Like a sleepy person, who, finding himself nodding in company, throws off his doze by staring his friends out of countenance in proof that he is wide awake, Lady Lynchmore grew stiff as Queen Elizabeth, after her lapses into good humour.

To so fastidious a person, the placid gentleness of Mrs. Askham was highly acceptable; for it imposed restraint upon her lord. No attempting practical jokes with Evelyn,—no hazarding a double allowance of claret, when about to join her tea-table;—and Eden Castle was consequently courted as an invaluable resource. Lady Lynchmore, who had been in fear of finding the vulgarity of her Irish country neighbours emulated, in a district so rustic as that of Edenbourne, was thankful for her agreeable disappointment. For she was haunted by the dread of vulgarity, as some people by that of infection. Conscious, perhaps, of a natural aptitude to imbibe the evil influence, she lived in a perpetual state of quarantine.

Having several tall raw-boned daughters growing up, like a herd of young camels, into what her father called "*divilish fine women*," her chief objection to Hexham had arisen from the difficulty of procuring a sufficient number of masters to pumice down the Ladies de Lacy into young ladies of fashion. But as in those days families in want of accomplishment-mongers had only to extend their hand and catch some needy foreigner who passed for an *émigré*, "*a prince or count in his own country*," (where, Providence it knows counts and princes were then little skilled for the diffusion of either useful or useless knowledge, with the exception of the be-Genlised Orleans family, the exception confirming the rule!) and Lady Lynchmore had accordingly secured the services of a certain Monsieur and Madame la Jouvencière, who, in utter contempt of the

English governess engaged to disbrogue her daughters, undertook to varnish with dancing and music, their geography and use of the globes.

Lord Lynchmore, who hated foreigners as much as it was in his philanthropic nature to hate anything that walked on two legs, would not hear of domesticating the La Jouvencières at the Hall; and right thankful was the Countess to Mrs. Hacket for pointing out the vacant tenement at Eastfield; which was instantly engaged for the dancing-master and the showy lady, who, though professing to be a French mistress and the nine Muses melted into one, was his lawful wife.

To the haughty nature of Philip, this desecration was insupportable. Fain would he have bought Eastfield, and razed the cottage to the earth. But the tax-gatherer's grandson being unluckily a minor, the place could not be sold; and ere a word transpired of Lady Lynchmore's intention, the La Jouvencières were installed!

A dancing-master and his wife!—What successors for Evelyn;—and what must the sensitively refined Countess think of a Mrs. Askham, who had emerged from a tax-gatherer's cottage rented at eighteen pounds a year!

To Evelyn, little covetous of the approbation of strangers, her ladyship's opinion seemed of minor importance; more especially from being just then happily reconciled to herself by a kind letter from Lady Uppingham; who, in dutiful imitation of the custom of her parents whenever *their* brothers and sisters were blest with an increase of progeny, favoured Philip and his wife with a congratulatory epistle on the birth of their little boy. For that Edenbourne was represented by a Whig, did not exonerate the amiable Margaret from her affection as a sister, or duty as an aunt.

Even Lady Askham, on learning that Mrs. Hardyng had been summoned to Eden Castle in consequence of the danger of her sister-in-law, relaxed so far from her harshness as to inquire after her progress, and the sex of her first grandchild; and little did the well-affectioned Evelyn suspect that, the brilliant marriage of Sir Hugh de Bayhurst having served to bring before the assizes of the great world the wealth and dignity of the Saville connexion, the dowager was not sorry for a decent opportunity to elevate the temperature of the family atmosphere a trifle above freezing point.

By these tardy acts of grace, she was more gratified in fact than they deserved. Not from a mistaken estimate of their value; but hoping that they might assist to smooth down the ruffled plumes of her husband, and reconcile him to the unattractive feebleness of his puny child.

Unluckily, the ruffled plumes were made only *too* smooth!—Partly from satisfaction at a renewal of the civilities of Uppingham Manor, partly from pique at the pomps and vanities of Hexham Hall, Philip was growing proud as a peacock; and Bob Hardyng did not fail to

discover and turn to account, the expansion of his gaudy plumage.

For the naturally high spirits of Bob were stimulated by the excitement of his Highland tour; and after the open-hearted and open-handed hospitalities of the North, he was not prepared to be frozen into formality by the hearthside of one of his nearest connexions. With a ready confederate at hand in the merry Lord of Hexham Hall, he did not scruple to indulge his satirical propensities.

It was a period highly propitious to the irony of those who, like Hardyng, entertained sovereign contempt for the empty titularity so distinct from hereditary rank. Aristocratic honours derived from ancestors on whom they were conferred in the feudal ages, when such distinctions possessed substantive value,—or badges of the ancient orders created in that secondary stage of civilization, when man must be extrinsically distinguished from his fellow-man in recognition of superior merits,—commanded his respect like the secular oak in Eden Chase, whose venerable branches had startled the palfrey of his dear Emma.

But towards the newfangled knighthood of certain Bayards to whom a spur was an inscrutable implement, and a sword as hard to wield as a Djereed, he extended as little indulgence as towards spendthrift lords who blemish their escutcheon by contact with the usurers of St. Mary Axe, or dissolute Dukes, that select their Duchesses in the green-room.

The recent creations of Pitt, who, regarding all social institutions as secondary to the purposes of politics, had not scrupled in the accomplishment of his parliamentary projects to be-coronetize the counter, and—

Take the pen from behind the ear
Of him he chose to make a peer,—

had done much to refrigerate in England that aristocratic glow, which, in Germany and Spain, is kept constantly at boiling heat in the *marmite perpétuelle* of the Heraldic College,—the Noble Chapter,—or the enactments of the Golden Fleece.

By Hardyng, the ennoblement of his father was considered, like the grade of general or admiral, a mere appanage of professional office; nor had it diminished his contempt for that most puerile among the Lilliputianisms of modern life, the love of title; a weakness unknown to the ancient world, and most dissonantly characteristic of the Christian era, whose spirit of humility, had the fault been pre-existent, ought to have extinguished it for ever!—

The batches of kings and princes daily sent forth from the imperial oven, and the creation of Mulatto dukes and frizzled royal highnesses by King Christophe of Hayti, afforded ready texts for the bantering of Bob. He delighted in distinguishing his Edenbourne constituents by similar honours; and never designated the market-place grocer otherwise than after the Haytian title of “Duc de la Marmelade,” while the dealer in spirituous liquors was “Duc de

Dantzig," the cheesemonger, "Prince de Neufchatel," the linen-draper, "King of Holland," and the crockery-woman, "Queen of Etruria."

Vainly did Philip attempt to silence his *mauvaises plaisanteries* on the plea that they might transpire, and hurt the feelings of the borough and the interests of the Askhams.—It was only too plain that his *real* ground of disapproval was the fear lest Hexham Hall should augur ill of the birth and breeding of a circle, addicted to such democratic impertinence.

Heaven bless him!—Lord Lynchmore was content to laugh with any body, at any thing, even had his own escutcheon been emblazoned on a corner; while in the eyes of his lady, the Hardynges and Askhams enjoyed an exceptional privilege, by virtue of the *cachet* of belonging to the exclusive set at Grandison House.

For into that sanctuary, the *parvenue* Countess had never penetrated. During the favour of Sir Robert de Lacy, she was safe in the bogs; and on her arrival in London, her eldest son being a school-boy and her husband's political influence zero, there was nothing to recommend her to the notice of so close a calculator as Lady Grandison.

Those whom that lady once ignored, were non-existent to *her* for the remainder of her days; and nothing could be more erroneous than the supposition of Lady Lynchmore that her own rotundity or the mellow laugh of her lord, had elicited the word *v—r* from lips so superfine. (The nervous whisper in which the Marchioness pronounced it can only be initially rendered!) She was, in truth, wholly unconscious of their existence.

A foe to affectation of all kinds, Hardynges had no mercy on the folly of a woman, who fancied herself hunted through life by the obscurity of her own birth, like Actæon by his hounds; and in pursuance of a habit too prevalent at Eske Hill, of selecting a butt in every party for the amusement of the rest, he was often tempted to show up Lady Lynchmore's fashion-seeking absurdity, for the amusement of Sir Walter Lesly and Trevor: who agreed that, as regarded Grandison House, the Countess became diminutive as the race which, of old, did battle against the cranes.

"Take my word for it," said Bob Hardynges, when the ladies had left the room; "all Lady Lynchmore's solicitude about her size and complexion, arises from the dread that, when forty, she shall be *too* fat and no longer fair enough to achieve the conquest of Carlton House."

"Scan. mag!"—retorted Lesly. "When you know that she never beheld the Prince nearer than through an opera-glass!"

"The Persian who has never seen the sun nearer than the heavens, does not adore it the less!" retorted Hardynges. "But it is no case of scandal great or small. Lady Lynchmore's idolatry arises simply from conviction that contact with the finest gentleman

in Europe, would secure her against being v—r for the rest of her days; a mere affair of kissing the Pope's toe, or a pilgrimage to Mecca!"

"*C'est qu'elle voudra se décrasser jusqu'à l'écorchure,*" said Horace Trevor, after a sip of claret.

"And foreseeing this," drawled Lesly, (an acolyte of the newly arisen sect of dandies,—the Young England of the epoch of fribbledom,) "*you*, Hardyng, who call yourself the friend of the fubsy little Marquis, have promised to introduce her to Lady Grandison,—high-priestess of the temple of Carlton!"—

"*Que voulez-vous?*" retorted Bob, laughing.—"One *must* sometimes lend a helping hand to one's neighbours!—As Madame du Deffand observes, "*il n'y a pas de mal à faire, de temps en temps, un peu de bien. On ne sait pas à quoi ça peut servir.*" Who knows but when Lady Lynchmore is a great lady, she may get my son made a beef-eater!—I beg her ladyship's pardon for a term so v—r. I mean a yeoman of the guard."

"You should really be more cautious, Hardyng!" remonstrated Philip. "It would be most unpleasant for me were these sarcasms to reach Hexham."

"Lesly—Trevor—make him name his hour and friend!" cried the incorrigible Bob.—"He takes you for common spies and informers!"—

"Did you never hear of such things transpiring through the gossip of servants?" rejoined Philip.

"As if our dear Countess would be guilty of the vulgarity of gossiping with servants.—Faugh!—*Les manants à la lanterne!*—She once spoke to her maid, but it was through an acoustic tube; and her orders to the footman to put on coals, are transmitted, like those of the Abbé de l'Épée to his pupils, in dumb show!"

And, suiting the action to the word, Hardyng exhibited so admirable an imitation of the imperial dignity of Lady Lynchmore, that the whole party, with the exception of Philip, were convulsed with laughter.

"Look at Askham!" cried Bob, provoked by the doggedness of his brother-in-law;—

"Egregii mortalem altique silentii?"

He reminds me of Nero, who when his lyre was out of tune, used to cut people's heads off!"

Then turning aside to Lesly and Trevor, he redoubled their merriment by a mimicry of Philip's air of dignified ill-humour.—"Truly said the ancient sage," continued he, gravely, "that, to appreciate a creature's powers, you must detach it from its species; for eagles would be held as cheap as swallows, if they appeared in flights alone.—Since Philip has resided in the country, like a *grand seigneur* as he is, there is no getting a word or a rise out of him, as

one used at Brookes's. When Lady Lynchmore rules the court, the camp, the grove, she shall have him made comptroller of the household to Gog and Magog, or originate an office for him as *introduceur des géants*."

Again did Lesly and Trevor laugh heartily. They were accustomed to laugh on trust at Bob Hardyng's jokes, which, at Brookes's, passed current from the mint:—Dukes of Cornwall at their birth.

Next day, they were all to dine quietly at Hexham Hall; and so seriously did Hardyng assure them *en route* that the Countess had compelled her husband to abandon Lynchmore Castle, only because the family portraits of the De Lacys, with their bossy outlines and rubicund noses induced strangers to suppose that Punch was a poor relation of the family, obliged to find a livelihood in the streets because Lady Lynchmore had proscribed him as v—r, that they declared it would be impossible to look their jovial little host in the face. Their gravity was instantly restored, however, by the dignified welcome of his lady; who, *corsetée en fer*, looked imperative as Boadicea.

Lest the jocularities of her lord should exceed bounds polite, everything in the entertainment was as studiously and coldly correct as though presided over by an archbishop. But with the inborn bad taste which, in spite of Lady Lynchmore's efforts at fine-ladyism, *would* peep out, after coffee appeared the Irish brigade of the Ladies de Lacy, escorted by Monsieur and Madame la Jouvencière; the former, as fogleman, arrayed in canary-coloured shorts, pink silk stockings, and pumps that mechanically placed themselves in the third position; while the latter was attired in a soiled white tunic and green wreath, like a half-pay Muse strayed out of a German ode, or a minor theatre.

By the multitude of sonatas and overtures, duets and trios, scattered upon the piano, it was evident that a severe storm of music was impending;—a war of the elements of harmony, which spared neither age nor sex. But after listening to as much Steibelt and Clementi as human nature could support, and wishing the La Jouvencières, by whom it was suggested, safely back in the country where they were a count and countess, Hardyng ventured to propose to Lady Lynchmore, who was engaged with Askham at chess, that his wife should let them hear some charming Jacobite songs, collected during her Highland expedition.

He almost repented his proposition, however, when he found Emma's performance, spirited and pleasing as it was, damned by the faint praise of the professionals; who remained close to the piano like base coin nailed to a counter, beating time as if for the practising of their pupils.

"*Bien,—mais très-bien!*" said the seedy muse in the green calico laurels, at whom, during Mrs. Hardyng's performance, Horace

Trevor had been looking some of the unutterable things suggested by Lord Lynchmore's capital hock ; while Monsieur la Jouvencière, inspired by native impudence and the patronage of a Countess, hazarded a *glissade* towards Evelyn, whom he regarded as a fellow-nobody because his predecessor at the tax-gatherer's cottage !

“ *Madame devrait associer son talent à celui de Madame Adding !* ” said he,—to mark his familiar acquaintance with her habits ; “ *Car je sais qu'autrefois, elles chantaient souvent ensemble.* ”

“ *Aujourd'hui, je ne chante plus,* ” replied Mrs. Askham, more graciously than was his due ;

*Suivant du rossignol l'usage et les leçons,
L'abord de mes petits a fini mes chansons.”*

“ *Ah ! que nous connaissons bien notre Racine !* ” cried the dancing-master, with a nauseous smirk of approbation, (Maître Adam de Nevers being to *him* a carpenter unknown ;) when Emma, who had overheard with delight both the quotation and rejoinder, gave the *démenti* to poor Evelyn, by proclaiming her a nightingale of all seasons.

“ Come and obtain a song for us from Mrs. Askham, my dear Lynchmore,” cried Horace Trevor, desirous to rivet the attention of the party upon the music, that he might renew his conversation with the Eastfield muse, with whom, not knowing a word of French

He could talk, like an egotist, only with *eyes* !

And to the uproarious solicitations of the Earl, it was in vain that Evelyn pleaded in excuse the want of strength arising from her recent illness.

“ Arh now !—*just* one little song couldn't possibly hurt a fly ! ” cried Lord Lynchmore ; and when at length both the request and apology reached the ears of her husband, engaged at chess with Lady Lynchmore at the extremity of the room, he broke through the dignified silence of the game to call out so loudly and angrily to beg she would “ comply without so much unnecessary fuss,” that Evelyn mechanically rose from her seat, and placed herself at the instrument.

As if compassionating the compulsion under which she was acting, every one drew near to listen, predetermined to be pleased and to applaud. But such was the charm imparted to her voice, (a very sweet baritone of moderate compass,) by a certain tremulousness arising from agitation, that no one ventured to interrupt by tokens of approbation, the following quaint and simple ballad :

BALLAD.

Spread thy light wings and flee,
Wild honey bee !—
The red red rose thy treacherous kiss hath rifled,—

With the pale lily's bell thy touch hath trifled,—
 Where the sweet citron bloom its scent exhalet,—
 Where the sweet woodbine's breath the breeze regalet,
 Thy sport hath been, this livelong summer day.

Cold dews arise!—Away;
 Spread thy light wings and flee,
 Wild honey bee!—

Spread thy light wings and flee
 Poor honey bee!

Go, hive thy plunder'd sweets for winter's pleasure,—
 Safe in thy waxen palace hoard thy treasure,—
 For lo! while thus thy selfish feast providing,
 The spoiler cometh, to thy refuge gliding,—
 Thy dainty task achiev'd, prepare for death!—
 Dense fumes suspend thy breath:—
 'Tis past!—All's o'er with thee
 Sweet honey bee!—

Scarcely had the plaintive symphony whose *bourdonnement* characteristically concluded the ballad, murmured to a close, when there was a universal cry for a repetition, supported, as before, by the word of command of Philip; and when, at the end of the second performance, Evelyn faint and breathless quitted the instrument, the Frenchman whispered with a sneer to Sir Walter Lesly (who drew back with much such an air of pity and disgust as if he had accidentally walked upon a snail,) that “*c'était vraiment d'une naïveté impayable!*”

Lord Lynchmore, meanwhile, swore loudly by everything it is decent to swear by in good society, that “barring the songs of Tom Moore, *that* was the prettiest tune he had ever heard in his life!”

“What is the name of it? Is the melody English, or French, or Italian, or Spanish?” inquired the Countess, coolly check-mating at the same moment her antagonist.

“Irish, I'll take my oath!” cried Lord Lynchmore; “it is so mighty pretty.”

“I really do not know,—I never heard it before,” said Philip, in reply to the interrogatory looks addressed to him.

“A tolerable proof of the usefulness of exerting one's talents for the amusement of one's husband!” cried Emma. “My dear, dear Philip, you have heard it half a hundred times! I remember Evelyn singing that ballad one night at Eden Castle two years ago,—without music; when she had been so long without a piano,—and was in the habit of making it a lullaby, to put the children to sleep.”—

Philip had heard enough. Though new to *him*, the song was doubtless one of Edward Saville's old favourites.

“You *have* sung it to him often before, have you *not*?”—cried Bob Hardyng, eager to convict Philip of a blunder—

“*Never.*” replied Mrs. Askham, in a low voice, sweet as her singing, but still more tremulous.

“And why not?—for it is as pretty as it is original.—Is not my friend Phil worthy of music so choice?”—

And the confusion of manner which accompanied Mrs. Askham's evasive answer confirmed the suspicion of Philip that a mystery of some kind or other was attached to the song.—He tried to recall the words. Yes!—She had doubtless selected them as bearing allusion to her own miserable destiny.—*She* was the lost honey-bee,—*he*, the treacherous spoiler!—Impossible to look more like Reynolds's Ugolino than the unhappy husband, while pondering over the allegory into which he had distorted that simple verse.—He lost both his temper and his game of chess!—

Luckily, the La Jouvencières had tact enough to perceive how thoroughly they were out of place, unless when they could make their professional services available;—and after a little whispering between them and their pupils, a proposition was made to the Marchioness for a little dancing;—which, like a damaged squib, sparkled for a moment, sputtered, and fell to the ground. None of the gentlemen present cared to exhibit their unsophisticated capers in presence of a dancing-master.—

It was only Bob Hardynges, who, when Lord Lynchmore, delighted at the idea of any thing merry, insisted that the girls should stand up for a reel, afforded himself the satisfaction of disconcerting all the *entrechats* and *jetés battus* suggested by the master of the ceremonies to his pupils, by cutting into the figure a genuine Highland fling, such as might have perilled the safety of any thing less solid than the oaken flooring of the old hall. Monsieur la Jouvencière seemed to consider the *naïveté* of this “*bourrée de montagnard*” quite as *impayable* as that of Mrs. Askham's romance.

The absurdity of the whole affair, however, served to break through the formality of the evening. Lady Lynchmore had been victorious; and with the exception of Philip's dolorous countenance, all was mirth and good humour.

To return home, the Eden Castle party had to divide into two carriages; and when they came to the door, a slight confusion arose in the hall from the disinclination of both Lesly and Trevor to form the third with Philip and his wife.—Trevor wanted to set down the French heroine;—both wanted to accompany the Hardynges.

“Fair play is a jewel, my dear fellow!” cried Bob, opposing the entrance of Sir Walter Lesly into his chariot, as he attempted to spring in, after Emma. “Were you to come with *us*, I would not answer for the consequences of a *tête-à-tête* between the happy couple yonder in the landau. What excuse would it afford for us to the coroner, that we could not suppose the Honourable Mr. Askham was about to strangle his Desdemona, merely because she had vexed him by her song of ‘Willow, willow!’”

Had Philip overheard this indiscreet sally, he would probably have refrained from alluding, before Lesly, who was forced to be their companion, to any thing that had taken place. But they

had scarcely passed the lodge gates of Hexham, before he alluded to the ballad.

Turning a deaf ear to Sir Walter's expressions of disgust at finding people intruded into society who were as much *déplacés* there as a page of Lindley Murray's grammar in a lady's album, he suddenly inquired of Evelyn in the low concentrated voice so much more terrible than loudness of anger, why Emma was more favoured than himself.

"How came you never to sing to *me*," said he, "a song with which she appears so familiar?"

The occurrence of the miniature inspired poor Evelyn with some suspicion of what might be passing in his mind. That frightful tone of voice was only too well remembered! That he should know the truth, was far better than the chance of renewing a scene so terrible.

"I fancied the song might be disagreeable to you," said she, "because I caught the melody, by ear from Moutiar, the Indian servant of Sir Erasmus l'Estrange, who, at Eastfield, used to accompany Edward in his rides. I, myself, adapted to its curious rhythm those old-fashioned words."

"But was *that* a reason for denying me the pleasure of hearing them?"

"You seemed to have taken so great a dislike to Sir Erasmus," said she, trying in vain to appear composed, "that I scrupulously avoid all mention of his name."

"So, so!" mused Sir Walter, who was staring from the carriage-window at the frosty sky, (as if as much interested in counting the stars of Orion's belt, as though they figured on the well-padded uniform of some new foreign ambassador,) "all, then, is not upon velvet between my friend Philip and his pretty wife!"—

And having extracted from the children, the preceding day, that their beautiful Shetland pony was the gift of "Sir Erasmus," and connecting the intelligence with Askham's present animosity, he decided, as became a satellite of Carlton House, that the man thus generous and thus obnoxious, must be also young and handsome.—The proprietor of the harmonious servant was evidently a lucky dog!

"I never should have expected, however," cogitated he, "that Philip Askham would turn out so confoundedly jealous!"

To divert the awkward silence into which the happy pair subsided when he ceased to examine the splendours of Orion, he began to laugh at the hospitable host who had been entertaining them. "His dinner was cold,—his champagne hot,—his liqueur *factice*."

"What a relief it must be to poor Lynchmore," added he, "that those handsome girls are growing up so miserably awkward! The dear Countess will have too much work on her hands in polishing them into decency, to leave leisure for taming down her husband."

Philip could not have found an affirmative, at that moment, had

his companion asserted the circulation of the blood or the polarity of the needle!

"On the contrary, it is a pity but she *had* leisure!"—cried he. "When left to himself, Lynchmore is such an ass!—It sickens one to hear such pretensions to red-hot patriotism from an Irish absentee!"—

"Surely he does his best for his country!" replied Sir Walter, in the tone of Mrs. Candour. "Whenever a change of ministry takes place, Lynchmore wanders from club to club, wondering 'what the devil they will do for Ireland?'—To-day, you heard him interrupt Lady Lynchmore's rhapsodies about the prince with—'Ay, ay!—a fine man of his inches. But what does he mean to do for Ireland?'"

"For my part, I hate all claptrap nationality!" cried Philip; "the mere brute instinct that gets drunk on St. Patrick's Day, and breaks heads at Donnybrook fair! The only thing that Lord Lynchmore *could* do for Ireland,—spend *on* the soil the noble income he extracts *from* it,—he leaves undone!"—

"I live in Ireland! I would see her d—d first."

said Lesly, coolly parodying the popular hexameter of the Anti-Jacobin.

But this somewhat startling sally, produced neither applause nor rejoinder. Nothing was heard for some minutes but the grating of the carriage while laboriously ascending a hill.

"MEM. Never to be bodkin between a loving couple who have quarrelled!" was the secret soliloquy of the exceedingly bored dandy. "When a man who respects himself is jealous, he shoots or stabs his wife, or her lover, or himself; and there's an end on't! But he must have been very badly brought up to inflict upon his guests his fits of green and yellow! Unless my friend Philip decides on something desperate within the next four-and-twenty hours, by Jove, I will order post-horses, and be off!"

He had no so long to wait! Within the next four-and-twenty minutes, as he was lounging opposite his dressing-room fire at the castle, reading in the London papers which had arrived during their absence at Hexham, the account of a Newmarket prize-fight between Gully, the champion of England, and Gregson the pugilist, his blood was suddenly curdled by a piercing shriek, proceeding from Mrs. Askham's room, which, on the opposite side of the gallery, nearly faced his own.

Nothing doubting that one or other of his barbarous suggestions was already accomplished, he seized the poker to rush to the scene of action. When lo! just as he reached the corridor, the door of the opposite chamber was flung open by a frantic hand!—

"Who comes from the bridal chamber?"

as Southey would say.

"Is it Azrael the angel of death?"

No! only a bewildered lady's maid, rushing down stairs in pursuit of her master!

"Where is Mr. Askham, sir?"—cried she, addressing the astonished baronet. "Where,—*where* is Mr. Askham!—Oh! my *poor* mistress!"

CHAPTER XIX.

Thou shalt be punish'd for thus frightening me;
For I am sick and capable of fears;
Oppress'd with wrongs, and therefore full of fears;
A woman, naturally born to fears.
What dost thou mean by shaking of thy head?—
Why dost thou look so sadly on my son?—
What means that hand upon that breast of thine?—

SHAKESPEARE.

Sir Walter Lesly fulfilled his threats of ordering horses the succeeding day, and taking his departure from the castle; but not because, as for a moment he had been attempted to apprehend, his jealous host had evinced tendencies to wificide. Horace Trevor, instructed by Hardyng, apprized him that "the family had received news of a distressing nature, which would render the presence of visitors a grievance." Like Macheath, "they must take the road!"

"Wretched sport and a worse *cuisine*!" was Lesly's succinct account of Eden Castle at Hurstwood, (the noble post-house of the Middlemore Arms happening to succeed the Askham Arms, in his itinerary of autumnal victimization.) The *ménage* seems thoroughly out of joint."

"Phil has scarcely run in double harness long enough, to be *quite* perfect in his paces!" replied Lord Middlemore. "But no matter for *that*. The happiest of men is a confounded bore to those who, being less happy, want to be more amused."

"From the first, his domestic felicity did not sit easy upon him," retorted the dandy. "He seemed to wear it, as the blacksmith does his Sunday clothes, only to make a show."

"But I don't understand, old fellow, how you came to curtail your visit?" resumed Middlemore, to whom the cunning man of White's had been distilling his news, drop by drop, as people are forced to do in a country-house, lest the supply should not be equal to the demand. "Your story seems to have neither head nor tail!"—

"Story, God bless you, I have none to tell, sir!"

They took care to keep me out of the secret. Besides, you treated me just now like your grey mare, and cut *short* my tale! I was going to explain that, having quitted Philip and his wife in the *beau milieu* of an amicable suit, which was beginning, like Hecate, to

“look angrily,” as I sat reading in my dressing-room, wondering whether they were kissing and making it up, or cutting each other’s throats, I was panic-struck by a shriek, shrill as that of Siddons in the Gamester; and was about to rush to the spot in my dressing-gown and slippers, when I luckily recollected that, in the best regulated families, it would be reckoned a higher crime to appear in a lady’s presence *en déshabillé*, than allow her to be peaceably assassinated.”

“So you sat still, and finished your newspaper?”

“No! I cut into the corridor,—where my pannel was smashed by a runaway lady’s maid rushing down stairs in search of Askham, who was sulking in the library. Letters had arrived from town, which set the whole family into hysterics.”

“Percy has been playing again, I suppose! That fellow will not be satisfied while there is a stick left on the estate! At Verdun, he is fleeced once a quarter, like a Biscayan sheep.”

“No,—it was not a question of finance,—Mrs. Askham is half out of her mind, because the guardianship of her children has been claimed by the family of her first husband.”

“What a deuced good riddance for Philip!”

“You would not have thought so, had you seen his face on the occasion. I have known fellows lose twenty thousand on the Derby, and not look half so crest-fallen!”

“Phil is a strange animal!” resumed Lord Middlemore. “He will neither follow the rein, nor take his own way. He never knows what he would be at; and never forgives those who are at the trouble of informing him.”

And this stricture of the coaching cousin was on the present occasion peculiarly correct. Though conscious of being heartily tired of the children, no sooner did Evelyn communicate to him the letter from Sir Hugh de Bayhurst’s solicitors, which claimed, by virtue of a holograph will of Edward Saville contained in his last letter to his brother, the care of his orphans, than he resolved to resist the demand with all the means and appliances of the law.

“So long, madam, as you remained single,” wrote the man of business of Sir Hugh, “my client was reluctant to interfere with your domestic arrangements — But his brother’s issue being now submitted to other governance, and since you have no longer a roof of your own, or even leisure to bestow upon them, it becomes his imperative duty to remove them to the charge of their nearest male relative. Your son, heir-presumptive to the noble property of Bayhurst, is of an age to demand a suitable education. I am, therefore, instructed to request you will hold the children in readiness to be surrendered, on the first of next month, to the custody of their legal guardian.”

“A testamentary letter? — a holographic will?” cried Philip,

after his first perusal of this epistle,—“the Court of Chancery will overset them in a moment!”

But on this point, the opinion of Lord Hardyngé undeceived him.—The will, if admitted to probate, must be valid. So vast a property, moreover, being entailed on little Edward Saville, the Lord Chancellor would, doubtless, favour the prétensions of his uncle to the guardianship.

“In your place, my dear Philip,” said Bob Hardyngé, after obtaining this information,—“I would let matters take their course. De Bayhurst can provide splendidly for the children, for whom you can do nothing; and you will soon have a houseful of your own, to reconcile you to the loss.”

But against this line of argument, the warm-hearted Emma chose to be heard in reply,—“Have you no consideration for the poor mother’s feelings?” said she, after her brother had quitted the room. “Is Philip the *only* person to be considered?”

“If Mrs. Askham truly loves her children,” pleaded Hardyngé, “she ought to be thankful for their change of prospects.”

“Thankful for *losing* them?—Monstrous!” cried his wife. “Instead of indulging in these cold-blooded calculations, I trust, dearest, you will kindly prepare to act as intermediary between Evelyn and your friend Sir Hugh.”

“I will prepare to obey any commands of hers or yours; but believe me she could not select a less efficient envoy,”—replied Hardyngé. “On Philip’s account, I should not *wish* to succeed; and on my own, should be horribly afraid of being knocked down by De Bayhurst for my officiousness, or halberded by his yeomanry.”

“Do not treat it as a joke!” pleaded his wife, more earnestly. “To lose sight of those children, is to Evelyn a matter of life and death!”

“How absurd!—when she is sure of a succession to supply their place, as long as that of Banquo’s spectral issue!”

“Consider the savage nature of the man to whom these poor little creatures are about to be entrusted!” cried Emma, forgetting how little was known to her husband of the relations between Evelyn and De Bayhurst.

“I have no doubt his savage nature has become mild as the moonbeams, since his marriage!”—retorted Hardyngé. “I anticipate wonders from the influence of Lady Anastasia! Remember the axiom of one of your favourite writers, that *une jolie femme habile se fait comme une atmosphère de bonheur, où les nerfs se détendent et les sentiments s’adoucissent.*”

“Why should you suppose matrimony to have so vast an influence over *his* character, when it has so little over your own?”—argued his wife, *almost* vexed. “Bob Hardyngé of Eske Hill could never be induced to talk seriously of serious matters; and Bob Har-

dyngge, the husband of Emma Askham, replies by a fool-born jest to a proposition in which her whole heart is concerned!"

"I am serious now, my dear little wife!" cried Hardyngge, affectionately taking her hand. "*Voyons!*—What am I required to do?"

"Start by the mail for town; and from thence, to Bayhurst; where you must exercise your ingenuity and exert your eloquence, to dissuade Sir Hugh from persevering in his claim."

"To Bayhurst?—I have never even been invited there since his marriage!"

"You go as an advocate,—not as a guest."

"But advocates proceed on such occasions by letter; as you have seen in the present instance."

"Not advocates who have a wife to content, as well as a client. Thank your stars that I do not propose to play Nerissa to your Portia,—and preach to this Sussex Shylock on the twofold benefit of mercy;—instead of which, I shall stay quietly here, and comfort Evelyn till you come back!"

There was no help for it?—Sorely against his will, Bob Hardyngge proceeded upon his expedition. He was too deeply indebted to the good offices of Philip, to decline the task the moment *he* expressed a wish for the interposition of his friend.

Not, however, that Hardyngge intended to burst like a shell into the centre of the fireside circle at Bayhurst, according to Emma's suggestion. The rectory-house at Holmehurst was at his disposal; his uncle's family being just then at Sandwich, with Lord and Lady Hardyngge, enjoying their professional holiday of a month at sea.

But though, on most occasions, tolerably self-assured, Hardyngge felt a little nervous at the idea of his first interview with the De Bayhursts. For to *him*, they were "**THE**" De Bayhursts still. Married on the same day, how could he suppose them otherwise than "the happy couple?"—His parliamentary avocations had secured him against noticing the coolness between them, or being enlightened by the gossip of society; and, nothing doubting that independence, wealth, and power, had converted Lady Grandison's daughter into a Lady Grandison a little less highly coloured, he expected to find her house the tumultuous resort of fashionable society, with Lady Anastasia presiding in the midst, like a miniature Semiramis on her throne.

Under such circumstances, seeing that she possessed the power of life and death over a person who was dear to him, he approached her with fear and trembling. For dear Stasy had wrongs to resent;—dear Stasy had injuries to avenge!—The interview could not but be disagreeable on both sides.

With anything but pleasant anticipations, therefore, did he approach Bayhurst. On entering the noble park—(the slopes and

vistas of which, nature had so diversified, that Repton and Capability Brown “toiled after her in vain,”) the majestic groves embedding the mansion and forming a rich contrast to the bold outline of the distant downs, seemed suddenly to expand for the disclosure of a Palladian structure, which, in any other land but England, (where country-gentlemen are princes,) might have passed for a palace. Bayhurst had indeed every pretension to the distinction :

Si verbo audacia detur
Non metuam magni dixisse palatia cœli!

“In such a home as this, dear Stasy cannot surely bear malice against me or Philip!”—cried he. “What a magnificent place; and how different from our half an acre of lawn at Eske Hill!”

Though often seen before, it assumed a different aspect as the property of Lady Grandison’s daughter. Still stronger was his persuasion of her perfect happiness, when, on arriving under the stately portico, an alert and well-disciplined establishment came forward to do the honours of the place.

“Sir Hugh was out shooting; her ladyship driving in the grounds. If Mr. Hardyngge had no objection to wait, messengers could be despatched to both.”

So little objection had he, that he begged neither of them might be disturbed.

“He would wait their time, and amuse himself in the picture gallery till their return.”

“How right was dear Emma,” thought he, as he entered that finely-proportioned gallery, with its mirific oaken floor unsullied by footsteps, and its stagnant atmosphere chilled by the profusion of marble columns and entablatures, so wholly unsuitable to our climate,—“how right was she in maintaining that no man is justified in burying chefs-d’œuvre of the ancient masters, in his country-seat! What glorious pictures are here,—and how lost to the world! One travels to Florence and Dresden to see some that are little finer! Were the works of art scattered in our provinces annually collected in a museum such as I saw in Paris, (a finer trophy for the memory of Napoleon, hereafter, than the battle of Austerlitz!) the world would admit that the shopkeeping nation has rifled to some purpose, the palaces of Venice and Rome!”

And with the epicureanism of a connoisseur, Hardyngge began leisurely to feast his eyes;—proceeding from Guido to Titian,—from Caravaggio to Salvator;—entering into the subject and treatment of each picture with such enthusiastic fervour of imagination, that both the artist and the action seemed to live over again before his face. He forgot that he was at Bayhurst. The gods of Greece,—the heroes of Rome,—the saints of Palestine,—were around him. Raphael and Murillo, Vandyke, Rubens, and Titian, seemed to hold him by the hand; till Sir Hugh and Lady

Anastasia de Bayhurst subsided into comparative insignificance !

How long his faculties had been thus enthralled by the contemplation of the great actions and great sufferings of antiquity, he knew not, when he was suddenly recalled from the thrilling details of one of Carlo Maratti's martyrdoms, by a footman of the house, spruce as a French marquis, and tiptoeish as a French comedian, who informed him that Lady Anastasia was returned, and awaiting his visit ; and as Hardyngge followed the bedizened dandy of the shoulder-knot through an imposing suite of rooms, he admitted that, were *he* proprietor of a family seat so noble, he should be apt to defy the remonstrances of his wife, in order to people it with creations exalted and exalting as those he had been contemplating, by way of antidote to the deteriorating influences of familiar life.

"It would require the countercharm of twenty Vandykes," thought he, "to be waited upon by an army of powdered jackanapes, such as yonder parti-coloured puppet."

Startled from his philosophical reverie by the announcement of his name, he found that the door suddenly thrown open before him, was that of the morning-room ; and that he was already in presence of Lady Anastasia.

But was it indeed Anastasia that rose from the sofa to receive him ?—Was the pale, wasted, nervous being who seemed to be in awe of her visitor,—herself,—the whole world,—really the gay-hearted creature he had seen so blooming and so joyous, the preceding year ?—So forcibly was he struck by the resemblance between her faded features and those of the chief figure in a Venetian picture he had just been studying, which represented the return of the shade of Eurydice from the Infernal Regions, that, for a moment, his eyes were riveted on the face of Anastasia, as they had been on the painting. He held her death-cold hand within his own, unable to utter a syllable !

He was recalled to himself by her gracious,—her almost affectionate greeting.—Nothing of Lady Grandison in her manner,—nothing of resentment !—She was genuinely glad to see him again.

But even that gladness did not suffice to bring a tinge of colour to her cheek !—The ordeal of a long country tête-à-tête with the man who hated her, seemed to have congealed the blood within her veins. At Bayhurst, there was not even the factitious effervescence of vanity, to keep her spirits from sinking. The glistening of jewels and satins did not suffice, *there*, to dazzle her eyes. In spite of those gilded ceilings, those storied walls, those living landscapes smiling in the sunshine beyond,—the perpetual winter of her fate was ever before her !

So far from having any *hauteur* to apprehend from the lady of De Bayhurst, Hardyngge perceived at once that her depressed spirit required re-assurance at his hands. Her voice trembled as she

addressed him,—though in answer to the commonest questions.

“Her father and mother were quite well,” she said,—in reply to his inquiry; “Lord Grandison at Newmarket,—Lady Grandison at Brighton. She had not seen them since she quitted London in August.”

After De Bayhurst, he had not courage to ask.—That she was either very ill, or very unhappy, was painfully evident; and in either case, he could not but connect the evil with the temper of her dark-browed lord. In so new a *ménage*, enemies from without are seldom very potential.

But when Lady Anastasia proceeded to express a hope that he was about to spend some time at Holmehurst, and that Mrs. Hardyng might be tempted to join him, he could no longer refrain from some allusion to the motive of his visit. Prior to her husband’s arrival, it might be as well to secure *her* interest, in support of his suit.

But what was his surprise on finding her wholly ignorant of De Bayhurst’s application! Though the daughter of Lady Grandison could scarcely fail to be an excellent actress, it was impossible but that her start,—her change of countenance,—her change of voice,—must be the result of unqualified amazement.

Such utter want of confidence between the newly-wedded pair was doubly astonishing to Hardyng; between whom and his darling Emma, all was open as daylight.

“My ignorance seems to surprise you,” said she. “But considering the estrangement that existed between Sir Hugh de Bayhurst and his brother, it is easy to conceive that all allusion to Captain Saville would be painful to his feelings.”

“But you have surely been apprized that his widow is re-married to my brother-in-law?”

“By others,—by yourself, in the first instance;—never by *him*!”

“At least you are aware that Edward Saville left children?”

“Mrs. Hardyng once spoke to me of the family of her sister-in-law,” said Lady Anastasia, faintly; her face becoming almost blue from the spasmodic contraction of her heart.

“And since that time,” said he, “another child has been born. You must have heard in town that my wife was sent for express to Eden Castle, in consequence of the danger of Mrs. Askham? We saved her, thank God, and saved the child,” added he, on receiving no reply, “or Philip, I suspect, would have gone out of his mind!—But the birth of his son does not render him less unwilling that poor Evelyn should be deprived of her elder children!”

Had Robert Hardyng been professionally accustomed, like his father, to study the countenances of juries, he would have discerned in that of Lady Anastasia, that he had lost a point. The idea of

Philip Askham as a devoted husband and happy father, instantly hardened her heart.

“If, as you assure me,” said she, “Sir Hugh de Bayhurst is bent on asserting his right of guardianship over his nephew and niece, it is out of my power to oppose it. In the most trivial instances, I never interfere with his affairs, and in one so peculiarly his own as this family question, should have neither pretext nor excuse.”

And by her mode of immediately leading the way to the dining-room, where a splendid luncheon was prepared and the servants in attendance, it was clearly her determination to avoid all further confidential conversation. Hardyng saw there was nothing to be hoped from the services of Lady Anastasia.

But it was no matter!—After the first half hour of the private interview soon afterwards granted him by De Bayhurst himself, it became equally apparent that not all the advocacy of as many wives as Bluebeard’s, or as many friends as Job’s, would have shaken him from his purpose!—He had fortified himself in his wayward will by a thousand specious arguments.—“His duty to the dead,—his duty to the living,—the deathbed instructions of his father,—the interests of the future representative of his family,”—all were brought forward in battle array, to prove that it behoved him to be inflexible.

“Had not my brother’s widow thought proper to marry again,” was the preface to all his asseverations that nothing should induce him to alter his plans.

Perseverance would have been waste of time. Having laid down his arms, Hardyng prepared to quit the field. But in the indiscretion of his candid nature, he first frankly admitted that, in Philip’s place, *he* should consider the loss of the children a relief, and that Philip himself would soon be of the same opinion.

“It is in behalf of the mother, I have been pleading,” said he; “for you will readily conceive that, with a child of his own already born, and the probability of a large family, my brother-in-law could very well spare the little Savilles.”

Like Protogenes, who, by flinging his sponge in despair at the canvas on which he had been vainly trying to pourtray the foam on the mouth of Bucephalus, produced by the accident the effect for which all his art was unavailing, this random taunt operated what his best eloquence had missed. Sir Hugh’s exorbitant sense of duty towards his brother’s orphans became suddenly modified, on learning that their departure would be no grievance to the man beloved by his wife; and Hardyng, perceiving and pursuing his advantage, without pausing to examine the origin of the weapons suddenly placed in his hands, contrived, by dexterous management, to effect a compromise. Before the malice of the baronet had time to cool, it was arranged that, if the boy were immediately sur-

rendered to his uncle's care, the girl might remain under the guardianship of her mother!

All Sir Hugh exacted, in return for the concession, was a formal and conjoint undertaking to that effect on the part of Evelyn and her husband, made through the hands of his man of business.

"In the discharge of my legal trust," said he, "I must secure the means of proving hereafter that the request made to me by the mother, was sanctioned by the authority of her husband. This must be no matter of caprice. If Mr. Askham undertake the charge of this child, it must be at once and for ever."

Throughout the negotiation, so little were the resolutions of Sir Hugh de Bayhurst influenced by personal courtesy towards Hardyng, that the invitation he now pressed upon him to stay dinner, was coldly declined. The visitor, who knew himself to be unwelcome as the brother-in-law of Evelyn, did not care to find himself patronized as the nephew of the parson of the parish; and when he took his precipitate departure, after a hasty farewell of his host, there was a sensation of mutual relief.

Far greater, however, was that of finding himself, at the close of his fatiguing expedition, folded, with warm acknowledgments, to the affectionate heart of his wife. Emma considered his embassy triumphant. Emma thought he had done wonders. Emma thought he had done *enough*!—It was only Philip who grumbled.—It was only Evelyn that wept.

Her boy,—her noble boy!—How was she to resign him!—Above all, how was she to resign him to *that man*!—What cruelty to take him from her!—What cruelty to separate the children!

"Between ourselves, my dear Philip, I fancy *you* are at the bottom of De Bayhurst's obduracy," said Hardyng, when he found himself alone with his brother-in-law.

"You surely do not suppose me guilty of the meanness of trying to disencumber myself of the children?" cried Askham, firing up.

"Guilty only of *not* trying to disencumber yourself of the affections of Lady Anastasia! The beast is jealous of you!—I read it in his looks, every time I pronounced your name.—I heard it in the inflections of his voice every time he named you. I could have sworn to it, even had I known nothing of the antecedents! It affords him exquisite pleasure, to possess the means of giving you pain."

"In that case, you were right to persevere in extricating poor little Selina from his hands," said Philip, as if he had previously thought the measure in some little need of apology. "But, for heaven's sake, not a word on this chapter before Evelyn!—She is already so wretched at the prospect of parting from the boy, that if she had reason to apprehend unkindness towards him from his uncle on any new provocation whatever, I would not answer for the result."

"She looks indeed most miserably!" said Hardyng, in a tone

of heartfelt commiseration. "Poor soul!—poor Evelyn!—in so short a life, what severe trials her fragile nature has undergone!—Would that the approaching separation were over!—When the little fellow is no longer here to agonize her by the expressions of his grief, she will turn for comfort to the children yet remaining."

How was he to conjecture that a chief part of the sorrow rendering Evelyn's eyes so red and her voice so tremulous, arose from the scarcely concealable *delight* of her son, at quitting Eden Castle!—

"I love my own darling mother," said the young rebel, in answer to the affectionate expostulations of Selina,—“but I cannot bear your dear Philip. He is no papa of mine,—and papa I will call him no longer. In his heart, he hates the sight of us. In his heart, he grudges us the bread we eat. Susan said as much, the other day, when he turned me out of the library for making a noise. My uncle, perhaps, will be more good-natured!—My uncle will give me a pony.—My uncle will look like that kind-faced picture of poor papa, which we were sometimes allowed to see, when we lived at Eastfield.—My uncle will not always be driving me out of his way.”

“You will think differently of all this, dearest Edward, when you get to Bayhurst,” said Selina, with tears trembling in her eyes.

“*Shall* I!—That's all!—Susan says that Bayhurst is twice as pleasant a place as this,—and she was born, you know, within a stone's throw of the lodge. Bayhurst was a lord's seat in the time of William the Conqueror!—Bayhurst, she says, is like Solomon's temple!—And poor papa was born there too!—You don't know, Lina, how I long to see Bayhurst!”

And though the boy forbore to afflict his mother by similar avowals, it was only too apparent that her affliction found no echo in his heart.

“I should have been very, *very* sorry to leave dear Eastfield,” was his frank reply when imprudently taxed with want of tenderness,—“but I am not quite so fond of Eden Castle.”

Though cut to the soul by this indirect accusation, Evelyn was still more alarmed lest Philip should detect the ingratitude of the boy, and visit it upon herself, by refusing to make the formal application for the custody of Selina exacted by Sir Hugh. No sooner was Edward out of her sight, than she trembled lest he should offend his step-father by some inadvertent betrayal of his feelings.

Nor was her dismay decreased by the inopportune arrival at Eden Castle of a guest both unexpected and uninvited, though well entitled to its hospitalities. Claude Askham, who, at ten years old, had insisted on entering the navy as parish boys insist on becoming chimney-sweepers, merely as the earliest mode of escape from the coercion of authority, had just landed at Plymouth, after a four years' cruise; transferred from ship to ship, and station to station;—till so home-sick from hardships by sea and land,—scanty fare and plenty of fighting,—that his first impulse on reaching his native

shore was to obtain leave of absence for a visit to Eden Castle.

He was aware of his father's death and brother's marriage. But what then? *His* rights in that place could never be altered. To his sailor-hearted warmth of nature, the old house was still home; more home than ever, now that his attachments were strengthened by having dwelt among aliens.—“*He* was not going to wait for invitations! No need of an admiral's signal before he dropped anchor in that well-known port!”—

“How changed it all is, and *you* most of all!” said the audacious stripling into which the truant boy had shot up. “To think, Philip, of finding you master here,—*you* whom my poor dear father used to bully so confoundedly!—I've often wondered since, you didn't slip your cable and run for it. I'd rather be coxswain to a slaver, than worked as *you* were!”

It was in vain that Mrs. Hardyng, apprehensive lest her wild brother should conjure up a storm, attempted to moderate his reminiscences, and divert the play of his batteries towards herself.

“*You* were boxed up with Miss Harrison in the school-room, fighting with the multiplication table, and saw nothing of what was going on below,” retorted the reckless lad. “And who ever expected *then*, Emma, to see you grow up into such a handsome woman!—I wonder whether I shall find everything in Mansfield Street as changed as it is here!”

In pity to the embarrassment of his wife, Bob Hardyng hastened to interrogate the young sailor concerning his traveller's wonders; the savage countries he had visited,—the coral reefs of Caribbean seas,—the fearful vegetation of Java,—walrus hunts in Behring's Straits,—or skirmishes with Port Praya dragoons.

And while Claude coolly recounted adventures supernatural as those of Gulliver or Odysseus, little Edward Saville sat open-mouthed to listen;—satisfied, not only that the midshipman was the greatest glory of the house of Askham, but the greatest hero extant since the death of Nelson. “He would *insist* on being a sailor, the moment he arrived at Bayhurst Park!”

“I am almost in hopes of getting made, as soon as the *Ajax* is paid off;” said Claude, when a figment more marvellous than all the rest had produced a dead silence in the little party; “that is, with a little interest to push me. You, who are a parliament man,” continued he, addressing Hardyng, “must give me a helping hand at the Admiralty.”

Declining so hopeless a task as to make manifest to cockpit experience the state of parties in Great Britain, Bob cut the matter short by advising him to bespeak the aid of his brother.

“Henry is in Parliament as well as myself,” said he; “and six times as grand a personage.”

“*Henry* in parliament?—Henry, whom I used to dress up in my nightcap and pinafore, and call Miss Henrietta Goodchild?—Henry,

who had so little pluck that he would have run away from a water wagtail?"—

"To say nothing of Henry, then, Lord Uppingham has only to speak half a word, to get you made Admiral of the fleet!" added Bob, not a little amused at this brotherly supplement to the portrait of the young member. "The loaves and fishes abide with *that* branch of the family. *We* are only the scrubs,—as you will learn before you have hung up your hat in the hall in Mansfield Street."

"Where, by Jove, I must be on Thursday!" added Claude. "For I've only a fortnight's leave, and must manage to get a glimpse of them all; especially Susy, whom I so often got into disgrace with Goody Harrison, for helping me to throw old Triton over the bridge. I expected to have found them all here, at this time of the year!—My mother used always to spend her autumns in the country!"

To make it clear to midshipman capacity that there existed a state of things in which a mother no longer commands a home under the roof of her son, was about as hopeless as to make him comprehend that, while the Tories were in office, the honourable Whig member for Edenbourne could do nothing for him at the Admiralty. — Better let him risk his random shots!—Better let him occasionally graze the temper of his irascible brother; and thus divert his attention from the despair of poor Evelyn, which had well nigh exhausted his patience.

For terrible was now the struggle of her feelings! *She* knew that, in parting with her child to Bayhurst, she was parting with him for ever! They might talk of future visits,—of uncontrolled intercourse by letter. But the affections of the boy would become estranged from her.—She would never be again to him as she *had* been!—*he* never again to *her* as he should never have ceased to be,—the first object upon earth,—because the last pledge of the attachment of the truest and most generous of men!

"By all that's good, Emma, we must get away from this place; for I can bear the sight of that woman's suffering face no longer!"—cried Bob Hardyng, straining his wife to his bosom, after escaping with her from the room where Evelyn had been seated for hours in blank despondency, scarcely knowing when she was addressed. "I never saw such intensity of grief. What a countenance,—what a heart-breaking study!—The *mater dolorosa* of Carlo Dolce is cheerful by comparison. Kiss me, my little Emma! If I thought your bright eyes would ever become swollen with weeping, and your merry face reduced to so careworn an expression as hers,—more especially on *my* account,—I vow to Heaven I would—but hush! here comes Philip—

Who, hush'd in grim repose, expects his evening prey.

I have promised to go with him and Claude, and look after the woodcocks."

“But why can’t he look after them without you?” said Mrs. Hardyng, who was grievously out of spirits.

“Do not grudge me to him, my dear girl!” cried Bob,—throwing on his shooting jacket. “Next week we shall all be gone, and nothing remain to console him, but the wan face of his wife.—Poor soul,—poor Evelyn!”

The Spoiler cometh, to her refuge gliding,
Dense sighs suspend her breath!
'Tis past!—All’s o’er with thee
Sweet honey-bee!”—

CHAPTER XX.

Grief fills the room up of my absent child;
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
Remembers me of all his gracious parts,
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form;—
Have I not reason to be fond of grief!

SHAKSPEARE.

Exigite ut mores teneros seu pollice ducat,
Ut si quis cera vultum facit.

JUVENAL.

All thought it an act of charity to leave the Askhams to themselves, as the day of parting drew near. Sad misconception!—for any restraint upon the feelings at such a time, serves to convert grief into vexation,—of two miseries, the *least*!

The moment the tears of Evelyn were unrestrained by spectators, they burst forth with spasmodic violence; till Philip began to fear that her strength, severely tried by her recent confinement, would yield in the struggle. The recklessness of Edward served to increase her misery. The poor infant was too delicate to quit the nursery. Her only comfort was Selina.

On the eve of the day appointed for the man of business of Sir Hugh de Bayhurst to fetch him from Eden Castle, Philip went in search of the little girl, whom he found seated in the corridor near her mother’s apartment, to be at hand if wanted, or out of the way, if importunate.

“Mamma is lying down,” said the child; “I am waiting lest she should awake and call for me.”

“You shall return to your post directly. But I have a word to say to you, Selina,” said Philip,—having led her into the study.—“Your brother is going to leave us to-morrow;—and I wish to impress upon your mind that *now* is the moment to evince your affection and gratitude towards mamma.”

As if the child were not already evincing it in every word, and thought, and look, and gesture —

“Your mother has done a great deal for you, and made considerable sacrifices for your sake,”—resumed the step-father; “and you must make it the business of your life, Selina, to reward her.”

The little girl blushed deeply;—opening her eyes as if trying to find a hidden meaning for what, in its apparent sense, was so needless an injunction.

“You are not aware, I dare say,” added her dear Philip, “that Sir Hugh de Bayhurst was anxious to take *you* away from her, as well as Edward. Aware that you have nothing to depend upon, and that mamma’s time is very much taken up with her baby, he thought it likely she might be glad to have you happily settled. But she did not wish to part with you, Selina; and at her desire, I have applied for the right of taking charge of you, and undertaken to afford you a home. I tell you all this, to show you how much it is incumbent on you to mark by your obedience your sense of all that has been done for you.—And now, my dear, go back to your post; and remember that, if to-morrow, when she will require so much support, I see a *single* tear,—I shall think it a poor return for all our kindness.”

Though half of this unnatural address was incomprehensible to Selina, she understood enough to feel humiliated; partly at the supposition of any possibility of want of attention on her part towards the dearest of mothers; partly because it was the first time in her little life that the sense of obligation had been imposed with leaden weight upon her heart.

The lesson, however, profited. Next day, though her usually blooming cheek was white as marble, and her usually expressive eyes fixed and dilated like those of a person recovering from a swoon, not a tear did she shed! No, not even when Edward scarcely found time to bestow upon her a parting kiss, so eager was he to jump into the chaise in which his trunks, teeming with her little presents, were already deposited;—not even when, after his departure, assisting old Susan to bathe the temples of her insensible mother.

It was at *her* suggestion the cradle of her infant brother was brought from the nursery and placed beside her mother’s bed, that it might be the first object to fix her attention when restored to herself; and she had too much self-command to give way, even when she saw by the burst of passionate fondness that followed the recognition, how dear a rival she possessed in her mother’s heart.

It was not till, on repairing to her nursery at night, when she saw the empty bed,—the empty drawers which there was no longer a dear, wild, noisy brother to toss over and discompose,—that, having none but old Susan to reprehend the indulgence of her tears, she sobbed as if her little heart would break! For the loss of Edward was more to her than to her mother.—Her mother had other ties to comfort her:—Selina, nothing!

The companion of her infancy was gone,—gone cheerfully,—gone, seeming to care little for those he left behind.—Selina picked up an old glove, which the servants had neglected to clear away with the rest of “Master Saville’s litter,”—(all that was left of him at Eden Castle,—) and placed it under her pillow to lay by among her treasures on the morrow:—something of *his*; something he had touched—her own dear graceless Edward!

Meanwhile that dear Edward was progressing towards Bayhurst in a state of the wildest excitement. It was the first time in his remembrance he had quitted the confines of Edenbourne, and all was novelty and delight. His companion was not backward in impressing upon his mind the consequence of his uncle and grandeur of his future residence; and the child, ignorant of pre-existent causes of alienation, comprehended Bayhurst only as his father’s home, and Sir Hugh as his father’s brother.

“*Now*, I am going to be happy with my *real* relations!” said he, as their entrance into Bayhurst Park suddenly recalled recollections of Mr. Askham’s reproofs and interdictions, ever rankling in his bosom. “*Now* I shall live where I have a *right* to live!”

If, at the memorable turn of the road leading from Edenbourne, he had not burst into the Askhamic apostrophe of “Adieu thou dreary pile!” it was from no want of abhorrence towards Eden Castle; and that mamma and Selina were still its inmates, alone qualified the proverbial ingratitude of childhood.

But while his young heart was thus agitated by anticipation, the emotions of the expectant uncle were scarcely less tumultuous. The child of Edward and Evelyn, about to become his inmate! The child of Sir Hubert’s favoured son—of the Benjamin of the old man his father—about to assume his place in the family, as heir of Bayhurst;—the child of his early playmate,—of the brother he had injured,—the brother he hunted into the grave,—about to sit beside his hearthstone—fixing on him, perhaps, the large dark eyes of Edward, and addressing him in tones of endearment resembling those of his well-remembered voice. It would be enough to recall the shade of that injured brother to the haunts of his childhood,—gliding along those echoing galleries and stately chambers,—to greet the arrival of the boy it was never his living fortune to fold to his bosom!—Like Goethe’s Corinthian Bride, Edward might perhaps be tempted to burst his cerements, and welcome the new comer!

But to these fearful and depressing imaginings succeeded a sentiment more characteristic of the vindictive nature of Sir Hugh de Bayhurst.

What would be the mortification of Lady Anastasia on seeing him enfold in his arms this adopted heir,—this future representative,—destined to render secondary her position in the family! If a promising and handsome child, how bitter would be her

jealousy of the indulgences he meant to accord him,—of the consequence with which he meant to invest him! While Evelyn Monson was doubtless weeping away her soul for the loss of the child his iron hand had wrested from her bosom, the other minion of Philip Askham,—the woman who had elected *him* to the miserable office of gilding a life which his happy rival had stripped of its illusions,—was about to see lavished on the son of the stranger all the love, all the indulgence, all the luxury, never—NEVER—to be shared by a child of her own!

Evening was drawing nigh when Edward was ushered into his presence; and Sir Hugh literally trembled to order lights in the library, lest the aspect of the child should disappoint him. But when they came, and he recognised at a glance one of the noblest little fellows in the world,—a boy scarcely eight with the spirit and proportions of ten, — he could not refrain from a warm embrace, as if to thank him for so fully accomplishing his projects.

So completely, indeed, did he accomplish them, that Lady Anastasia was lingering in tears in her own apartment, from reluctance to behold the child thus forced on her adoption. Not because she saw in him the heir of Bayhurst; not because he was to form a perpetual reproach to her childless existence;—but because fresh from a home where she believed the object of her first affections to be enjoying unqualified happiness with the *only* object of his own!

Some breath of its envied atmosphere might linger among the clustering curls of the beautiful child,—the child of the happy Evelyn. Some familiar expression of Philip's might startle her from his lips. It is not of her husband she is thinking. It is not Sir Hugh whom she accuses. “Non est conjuge quidquam quæstus suo : quid enim nisi se quereretur amatam.”

But when, at length, she made her tardy appearance, with the inconsistency apt to arise from the struggle of feelings repented, she received little Edward almost *too* affectionately!—Tears mingled with the kisses she impressed upon his glowing cheek.

“*I know* I shall be so happy here!” said the boy, when, after dinner, his uncle led him through that portion of the house in daily occupation, to the handsome apartments especially destined to his use. “Do you know I wanted to go to sea, only to get rid of Mr. Askham!—For how could I guess I had friends who would be so kind to me!—*This* is indeed a home!”

Next morning, his raptures were unbounded. The pony which was to replace Elshie, proved to be of a size that might have contented that stalwart hero of his emulation, Claude Askham; and on his admiring a handsome black grey-hound which followed his uncle to the stables, it was made over to him at once. “Master Saville’s groom was ordered to take Lufra under his charge, as well

as Lapwing the pony, and hold himself, with both, at the command of his young master.

By the time Edward had accompanied Sir Hugh round the magnificent stables and well-arranged kennels, which a little world of well-drilled servants placed in somewhat different order from the ill-appointed establishment and half empty stalls and coach-houses of Eden Castle, the boy had expanded into a sense of his own and his uncle's dignity, which might have served the heir-apparent of the realm.

The older servants of the house, in several instances descendants of ancient servitors, came eagerly forward to look upon the young stranger, with an air of deferential interest that did not escape the notice of his uncle. But though, for a moment, a jealous pang shot through his heart that it should be Evelyn's child to whom such marks of affection were conceded, his predominant feeling was joy in possessing so satisfactory a representative. The blood flowing in the veins of that princely boy was at least congenial with his own. But for *him*, all must have become the inheritance of the stranger!

"What fine pictures!" cried Edward, when conducted into the gallery. "I heard Mr. Hardyng say they were nearly the finest in England. But is there no likeness, among them, of my papa?—Surely there must be *some* portrait of him at Bayhurst?"—

And when shown, in the private study of the late Sir Hubert, a beautiful sketch by Wheatley, representing a "Return from Shooting" that included portraits of the baronet and his sons, with their favourite dogs and horses, the child instantly selected his father from the group. The medallion which had been the object of such malicious vengeance to Philip Askham, rendered the features familiar.

"What a pleasant face!" cried the little fellow, with his eyes riveted on the open countenance of Edward Saville. "How well he looks on horseback! Old Susan always says papa was such a *gentleman*,—so much more of a gentleman than Mr. Askham.—Susan could never call *him* master!—I shall come every day, if you will let me, and look at this dear picture!"

"What puerile details are here!" exclaims some sapient reader,—substantial enough to furnish materials for half a dozen county members. "Have you nothing better for our instruction or amusement, than the prattle of a child!"

As if such puerilities were not designed by Providence to conceal, like a graceful arabesque, the harsh outlines of human life!—As if the prattle of a child were not a gift of grace, like the flowers of the field, or the songbirds of the wood, vouchsafed us to convert our Arabia Petræa into Arabia Felix!

In a criticism upon the glorious essays of Montaigne, the learned

Scaliger accuses the old Gascon of impertinence, for having informed the world that he liked white wine better than red.

“Who cares what wine he liked!” cries the indignant critic;—“and who is to endure such triviality and such egotism!” Vain wordcatcher! It is because he *did* acquaint us with his preferences—the weaknesses of his powerful nature,—that he has become the fireside companion of succeeding centuries! While the name of Scaliger *remains* a name, dry and mildewed as some old portrait in the Bodleian, Michel de Montaigne is a friend we would fain have drop in to dinner, to share the best bottle of hock in our cellar, or, better still, the best binn of feelings in our heart;—and chiefly because his own was turned inside out for our delectation.

So much for puerilities! But let those who to childish prattle prefer solemn prose, and the *pas grave* or Pavon of life to simple morris-dancing, leave the children to their play, and accompany us to the stately gates of Uppingham House, where the family were already settled for the winter; the Marquis being compelled, like other official men, to shorten the shortest days of the year, by passing them in a metropolis whose inhabitants are defrauded of half their lawful daylight by the conspiracy of fog and smoke.

Content to exchange the noble freedom of his baronial hall for slavery in Downing Street, for the satisfaction of adding a foreign *crachat* or two to his collection of ministerial insurance-plates, or perhaps of working out his passage to ducal strawberry leaves, the Mahomet of the Tories appreciated the full value of such a Seyd as Henry Askham, for the collection and diffusion of his doctrines.

Henry was now his right-hand man,—private secretary, preparatory to becoming *under*-secretary, when his beard and the Times would permit. In the estimation of Lord Uppingham, who held with Buffon that “*le génie c’est la patience*,” Henry was a man of genius. The experience of a long official life had taught him what marvels may be accomplished by the industry of the most insignificant insects,—the colossal structures of the white ants,—the circumvection of the lofty elm by the mite under its bark,—or the sub-aqueous undermining of the pipe-worm, which, by endangering the dykes of Holland, once brought the Seven Provinces to the brink of ruin. No one better understood than the noble P. C. the power of the Infinitely Little, when solidified by obstinacy, and actuated by unity of purpose.

Now Henry Askham was a man capable of burning the midnight oil for three hundred and sixty-five nights over the autopsy of a fly’s leg; and of devoting the ensuing three hundred and sixty-five days to proving to the world that its organization was more complicated than the leg of an elephant. Henry Askham was a man into whose brain could be compressed reams’ full of financial or statistical calculations; the figures of which, when duly emitted in

the House sufficed to bedunce the brains of five hundred wiser men ; — like the Mongolfier balloons, which, after folding up to carry in the pocket, may be inflated to traverse the realms of space. He was, in short, as unexceptionable a secretary for Lord Uppingham as those great machinists, Vaucanson or Weeks, could have made to order.

His precocious gravity was really imposing ! Like Cromwell, he appeared to be seeking the Lord, even when looking for the corkscrew ; — and though the empty assumption which Balzac calls *la fatuité de la bêtise*, is scouted as folly so long as it arrays itself in a cap and bells, let it only assume the toga or the surplice, and the world will have to make way for its disciples !

Any one who, from a sufficient eminence, has the audacity to proclaim with sufficient perseverance his own merits, will in the end obtain belief. Such was the notion apologueized by the Roman artist in that charming fresco at Pompeii, which represents a parrot in a lofty car, driving a harnessed grasshopper, — supposed to convey a sarcasm against the wordy Seneca and his imperial pupil, from the pencil of some contemporary H. B.

But prating parrots in lofty cars are birds of every century and nation ; and feeble grasshoppers lend themselves to their reins at Whitehall as well as on the Appian Way ; and lo ! Henry, the mouther of truisms, — Henry, who by public and laborious parturition of discoveries familiar to the other Solomon, contrived to make them pass for his own, — Henry was already hailed as a new lawgiver, found floating in infant strength among the bulrushes of the Thames. Deluded country gentlemen quoted the aphorisms of Sir William Temple, believing them to be those of Henry Askham.

While the eloquence of Hardyng, sparkling with wit, (like certain rivers glittering with mica, which their affluent impetuosity has brought down from a higher source,) was condemned as showy and superficial, the heavy, leaden-coloured flow of Henry Askham's navigable stream was more congenial with the nature of the sons of commerce. Cabinet ministers and privy counsellors recognised him as "*du bois dont on fait des hommes d'État.*"

As, forc'd from windguns, lead itself can fly,
And pond'rous slugs cut swiftly through the sky ;
As clocks to weight their nimble motions owe,
The wheels above urged by the lead below,

the affairs of Lord Uppingham's department were seen to flourish admirably in the hands of his brother-in-law ; who stood exalted upon his lordship's shoulders, in public estimation, like King William's statue of *plomb doré* upon its shapely pedestal of granite.

For an official career, such owlshness as his was worth a million ! The public, which sees a Lord Chancellor in the woolsack and wig, disdains to be enlightened by the flambeau of truth, if

adorned with a frippery *bobèche* of snipped paper :—nor would the greybeard-diction of Friar Lawrence be listened to, except from a Friar Lawrence wearing a grey beard.

When led by the nose, the public chooses that it shall be, like Satan, by the red-hot pincers of a saint ; or, if led by the ears,—a more ordinary mode of official traction,—by a hand that lays itself as caressingly on its predominant features, as the hand of Titania on the Ass's head of the deluded Bottom !

Such was the origin of the growing fame of Henry Askham !—Sir Henry Bate Dudley, the be-cassocked Cicero of the Morning Post,

bragg'd of him
As of a virtuous and well governed youth ;

and though John Bull no longer recognised *any* living pilot as capable of weathering the storm, it was something to have secured a cabin-boy with courage to climb to the foretop, and

Like a sweet little cherub to sit up aloft,
And watch o'er the fate of poor Jack !

But, Heaven forgive us,—why waste time in detecting alloy in the metal, pre-ordained by Mint-currency to pass for gold ! To maintain in our old age the hero-worship whose emanations go so far to gild the atmosphere of youth, we must accept things on their own showing.

For if the bliss of ignorance be questionable, no one will deny that the spirit of Analysis is the bitterest fruit that has been forced by culture out of the root of human intelligence. Since the age became over inquisitive, nature has been stripped of her beauty, and art of her grace ;—the fragrance has been pillaged from the flower, and the brightness from the stars. By the iron wheels of its machinery, all that we venerated has been ground into dust, or in the crucible simmering over its furnace, fused into vapour.—Nothing is solid under its probe,—nothing elevated under its quadrant. It has taught us to

Peep and botanize upon our mother's grave ;

decomposed the sigh of love, to determine the weight of its gases ; applied its thermometer to the glow of a patriot's heart ; and suspended its weather-glass amid the wavering prayers of an expiring saint.

The lambent diamond has become opaque carbon. The ashes of the dead are constantly torn up to prove that the hand which smoothed their dying pillow, poured poison into their cup. It has been shown us that the death-bed piety of Addison was mellowed by a dram ;—that Lucretia, the vainest rather than chastest of her sex, preferred the loss of honour to a stain upon her reputation ;

Ne non procumbat honeste,
Extrema hæc etiam cura cadentis erat.

But what have we gained in exchange for our lost treasures? What is there to reconcile us to

*L'adieu qu'en s'en allant chante l'illusion,—
L'espoir éteint,—la barque attachée à la grève?*

What apology can the microscopic-eyed monster which besets us, scalpel in hand, and vitriolic tests in pouch, afford for having robbed the rainbow of its hue, and virtue of her halo?—

Alas! the first man who ate of the apple of knowledge, died of indigestion; and worse than death is the moral atheism which Analysis has engendered, and the materialism to which it would degrade us. Better mistake fifty such impostors as Henry Askham for true prophets, than that one angel should present himself at the door of our tent, and, through mistrust, be denied hospitality. Poor angel!—The scrutinizing spirit of the times we live in would doubtless present him with a mendicity ticket!

Whether or no the genius of Lord Uppingham's jackal rose to the high-water mark assigned it by his patron, he unquestionably possessed a dromedary power of patience. Throughout the ensuing tedious months, in which parliament was endeavouring to make up its mind whether it had done right or wrong in sanctioning expeditions to the Baltic and Dardanelles,—stunning its own ears with old womanish objurgation, lest perchance it should overhear what all Europe was talking about,—those fatal views of Napoleon upon Spain, which eventually extracted from the British empire some of the best blood in its veins,—Henry Askham stood fast beside the ministerial benches, like a sentry on guard over the crown jewels.

While the Marquis defended himself in the Upper House with the weighty solidity of a man firm in the favour of his sovereign,—firm in the esteem of the nation,—and firmest of all in a social position enabling him to dispense with both,—Henry, like a blind devotee, adopted his tone and self-possession, without pausing to calculate their origin.

But though the young member resembled his noble brother-in-law on the treasury bench, only as a flimsy engraving resembles some powerful picture, the busy public, which, too hurried in its judgment to be very discerning, purchases the flimsy engraving that reminds it, even remotely, of a favourite master, was content; as the populace, in the absence of Gessler, bowed the knee to his empty cap.

While Bob Hardyngé vainly attempted to rouse the dormant faculties of the House by startling exhortations, such as

*Soyez de votre temps,—écoutez ce qu'on dit!
Et tâchez d'être grand, car le peuple grandit!—*

or in a debate upon navy estimates, trifled with its time by allusions to the Argonauts, the Sea kings of Norway, or the Spanish Armada, the treasury hack won golden opinions by bringing forward, in

reply, a specious array of figures that might have been the numeration table chopped in a chaff-mill for any information it conveyed to ex-official ears.

The House cheered it, however,—and the public heard and believed. It sounded so much like something that *ought* to be believed! The public observed that demonstration is demonstration,—that facts are facts,—and figures (those that are not tropes) unanswerable arguments.—Anything rather than admit that they were incomprehensible!

CHAPTER XXI.

On a beaucoup écrit, et avec raison, contre les ingrats. Mais jusqu'ici, on a laissé les bienfaiteurs en repos; et c'est un chapitre essentiel qui manque à l'histoire des tyrans.

D'ALEMBERT.

While the wordy war of parliament was waging in London, at Eden Castle all was silent as the grave. Not more dead the leafless woods and withered vegetation than the heart of Evelyn! Her efforts to appear cheeful under her misery served only to render it more apparent.

For it was not alone her moral nature that was suffering. Her strength, which had scarcely rallied after the shock of her inauspicious confinement, sank under this second blow. No effort,—no self-government,—could disguise the illness preying upon her frame.

And to increase the mischief, Philip saw fit to take her indisposition as an affront! She was not *ill*,—only fretting,—fretting after her boy,—fretting after “little Saville;” and little Saville having been avowedly taken from her in consequence of her marriage, he had a right to consider every tear shed by his wife as a reproach to himself. Whenever unusual paleness overspread her cheek, he had scarcely patience to address her.

Even when Dr. Boswell, beginning to be alarmed, hinted that change of air might be beneficial, the recollection of Simprens's interference in the case of Percy, hardened his heart. He felt convinced that Evelyn, desirous to escape from the reminiscences connected with the neighbourhood of Edenbourne, had prescribed for herself through the medium of the obsequious doctor; whose advice that “he would on no account allow her to suspect the precariousness of her condition,” passed for an extra dose of hypocrisy.

“As to removing from Eden Castle, Evelyn had chosen to decline the invitation of the Hardynges when there was every reason for accepting it; and he did not think it right to convert their house into a *maison de santé* as she seemed to desire, merely that she

might be a couple of hundred miles nearer to her idolized son."

The Lynchmores had luckily taken their departure for town; for the impossibility under which Mrs. Askham found herself to accept their invitations, had already given offence. The Earl was a man more familiar than friendly; whose skin-deep good-nature, though ready to laugh with the merry, found little sympathy for the sorrowful. Having gone through life without personal misfortunes, he looked upon grief as a thing that mutes are hired to deplore; and had no notion of having a lid of feathers introduced into the social circle.

"*Ill again!*" cried he to Philip, as they were riding home from hunting, on receiving a fifth consecutive excuse to a dinner invitation, on the plea of Mrs. Askham's delicate health. "Then faith, my dear fellow, I can hardly wish you joy; for you seem to be in for it for the winter. 'Twas a mighty oversight on the part of the old gentleman not to have tempted Job with the trial of a sick wife!"—

The words "sick wife" grated on the ear of Philip, almost like an insult. Such was the plea of the labourers when they came begging to the housekeeper at the castle, for arrow-root and port-wine; or the pretext of a needy tenant to the steward, to obtain a remission of rent!—Nothing would be more provoking to him than to have it circulated through the county that Mr. Askham of Eden Castle was very much to be pitied, "because he had a sick wife."

So little was he at the pains of concealing this from Evelyn, as to incite her into imprudent exertions that served to aggravate the evil. By stealth only could she indulge in the reveries in which she solaced herself by following step by step, and feeling by feeling, the progress of her boy;—arriving with him at Bayhurst, and retracing the haunts of her childhood. To Philip and Selina, after the departure of the chaise that conveyed him away, all was a blank in his destiny. But *she* could picture to herself every incident of his life. Above all, she could only too vividly foresee the sensations of his uncle on installing under his roof the child of the woman who had spurned him, and of the brother whom he had spurned.

With what anguish of spirit did she surmise the revengeful malignity about to embitter the existence of her devoted boy. For *her* gentle nature was incapable of imagining the still more cruel vengeance devised by De Bayhurst, of withdrawing from her by excessive kindness the affections of her son,—teaching him to despise *her* and abhor the husband of her choice!

"There, where my childhood suffered," mused she, as memory retraced the long forgotten scenes of Holmehurst Hanger and the old Grange with the woods of Bayhurst looming in the distance,—
"there, where I used to languish for want of a mother's kindness, my neglected boy will wander and weep!"

What tears streamed from her eyes as she dwelt on all he might

endure! No wonder that Philip resented the despondency and loss of sleep and appetite, which proved how large a share of her affections was invested in another.

At length came the usual fiat of a frightened physician. "Mr. Askham must take further advice." And Mr. Askham having occasion just then to visit London, to transfer the money for a commission procured for his brother Richard through the Uppingham interest, and take leave of Claude, who, thanks to the same protection, was about to sail for the Baltic,—he insisted upon her leaving the children with Susan, and accompanying him to town. It would be easy, with Emma's connivance, to arrange without alarming her, a consultation with Dr. Baillie.

But alas! Eske Hill was no place for a "sick wife." Though Mrs. Hardynges did her utmost to moderate the spirits of her husband to the serenity befitting the atmosphere of a nervous invalid, Bob was so happy to have them there,—so happy in his family,—so happy in himself,—that he was not to be tamed into quietude. The stirring, prosperous activity of the world he lived in, seemed to allow no leisure for people to fall sick, and die, and be buried. Time enough when they grew old and grey and useless. Like my uncle Toby in the case of the poor lieutenant, he *swore*, and loudly too, that Mrs. Askham should recover.

For the shattered nerves of Evelyn, these noisy demonstrations, and the fatigue of dress and conversation, proved too much. Nor were her feelings less tried by the motherly kindness with which she was welcomed by Lady Hardynges, than by the *un*-motherly civility of Lady Askham; who thought she did wonders by driving with her daughter to Eske Hill, to inquire after Philip's wife,—Philip's wife, who had so patiently soothed the declining days of her lord!—

But her worst trial of all was inflicted by the gentle egotism of Lady Uppingham; who, having insisted that the invalid should spend a day at Uppingham House, to effect a consultation with Baillie, could not forbear exhibiting to the doubly afflicted mother her own robust boy, now a noble fellow of four years old; enlarging with unguarded selfishness on the pride taken by his father in the promise of his youthful heir.

"She is so unreasonable!" cried Philip, on finding his wife some hours afterwards, overcome by an hysterical affection. "You heard what Baillie said about the necessity of keeping herself quiet: that though there was no organic disease, cheerfulness and repose were indispensable. Yet you see how she agitates herself for nothing! All this absurd emotion arises from having discovered through Hardynges, that the De Bayhursts spend the season in the country, when she hoped to find them settled in Grosvenor Square, and obtain a glimpse of that accursed boy!—This attack will prevent her leaving her room to-morrow, and Bob has a dinner party expressly to

introduce her to my friends!—I do believe some women take pleasure in being sick, for the mere satisfaction of the annoyance they occasion!”

Yet his sister neither explained nor understood that the crisis was brought on by witnessing the passionate tenderness with which little Lord Roseneath had thrown his arms round her neck, on her return from her drive, showering the kisses of his rosy mouth on “his own dear darling mamma!”

The mood of Philip was in truth any thing but softened by his visit to London. Half an hour spent in the metropolis serves to convince even the vainest man of his insignificance; and in *his* case, it served also to convince an envious one of the superior distinctions of other men to whom he fancied himself superior. All his contemporaries,—many of his juniors,—were *something*. Both Hardyng and Henry were established among the celebrities of the day,—written in Italics,—recognized by the eye of the London public on the glasses of its galantie show. Their speeches were not only listened to in the House, but looked for in the papers. The bonmots of the one were repeated at Boodle’s,—of the other, at Brookes’s. Each was a great man in his circle.

Even Middlemore, if not *something*, was *somebody*. When his well-appointed equipage appeared in the park, the crowd proclaimed his name. His dashing recklessness was popular with the vulgar. When he entered the yard at Tattersall’s, his coming produced a rise in the stock, as that of Rothschild on ’Change, in the stocks; and Lord Lynchmore’s handsome boy, Lord Delvyn, and the other rising lads of the day, affected the “Middlemore crop” and “Middlemore snaffle.”

The Duke of Norcliffe, on the other hand, was hailed by the newspapers as an enlightened patron of science, because (the crust in which he had been baked by Dr. Dactyl never having chipped off) he was in the habit of taking his daily doze in the chair of some scientific meeting. Sir Henry Lenitive was semi-canonized as a philanthropist, for his zeal in presiding over the plates of the public dinners, given to eat up charitable institutions six days in the week, and holding the plate after the sermon given to preach them up, on the seventh. Sir Robert de Lacy was on the committee of one of the patent theatres, receiving thanks, and a piece of plate, for his suggestions of converting the noble tragedy of Bonduca into a ballet, and gilding the national pill of Shakspeare with gaudy processions and ovations to make his medicinale gums go down. Each of Philip’s contemporaries had his appointed sphere. Each of them was doing something to make himself useful, or famous, or notorious. But what was *he*?—His history was a blank! He was not higher in the world by the altitude of a chioppine, than when he quitted Eton!—

Like most married men, who have missed their vocation, for

want of sagacity to discover the exact moment and critical chance

That quite unmakes them, or that makes them quite,

he denounced his wife as the cause of his failure. But for *her*, he should have been in parliament. But for *her*, he too should be interrupting the business of the nation by allusions to the Sea Kings of Norway and the Spanish Armada. But for *her*, he should have requited the attachment of one who would have brought sunshine to his fireside, and basked with him in that of the world. But for *her*, Anastasia and himself, instead of being separately extinguished in rustic seclusion, would have become predominant influences in London life. "And what other," thought the apostate who had exchanged the Market Place of Edenbourne for glorious St. James's Street at the exact moment when the horses' heads of all England are turned towards the metropolis,—"*what* other is worth living for on earth!"—

Yet, instead of feeling gratified for the sacrifices he supposed himself to have made for her sake, Evelyn would not so much as assist in qualifying the evils she had created, or renewing his interrupted social connexions, by exerting herself to make acquaintance with his friends, or accepting the attentions of her own! Lord and Lady Hardyng were more than kind in their invitations,—the Lynchmores had given several parties in her honour, and placed their opera-box at her disposal;—the Uppinghams, overlooking all causes of offence, were desirous to show her every attention; while the minor branches of the Askham family, followed, as the minor branches should, the inclination of the parent stem. Had she been a daughter of Grandison House, instead of the poor widow of Eastfield, they could not have been more attentive.

Philip did not perceive that their assiduities resembled those of a hive of bees, which are known to embalm with wax the body of the atropos moth that has crept into their hive to die, in order to diminish the ill-effects of a nuisance they are unable to eject. The pleasanter their sojourn in town was made to the rustics, the less annoying was it to themselves.

Of the interested nature of their attentions, indeed, he had soon a striking illustration. A mysterious little note arrived from Lady Lynchmore, requesting a private audience, at her house in St. James's Square; and having been occasionally called into council by her ladyship, in the country, concerning parish premiums and district benevolence, Philip anticipated only a charitable mission to some *protégé* in the neighbourhood of Edenbourne.

Alas! Lady Lynchmore thought as little of Hexham Hall in London, as she thought of Lynchmore Castle at Hexham Hall. No Nelly Knowles had hereditary claims on *her* flannel and opodeldoc. For it is one of the minor curses of absenteeism that charities uprooted from their native soil, seldom take root in the land of the

stranger. Like other exotics, they become dwarfed, and dwindle away for want of a congenial atmosphere.

Her ladyship's object, on the contrary, was exclusively of the Genus Londinensis. She wanted him to speak in her behalf to Lady Grandison! Bob Hardyng, with his usual recklessness, had laughed off his engagement to stand her friend; and she relied upon Philip, her country neighbour, who had eaten of her venison pasties and drunk of her claret cup, to officiate as intermediary. Next year, her son, Lord Delvyn, would be entered at Oxford. Next year, her daughter, Lady Emilia de Lacy, would be presented. And it was essential to their prospects in life, to be passed as sufficiently fine into the fashionable world, through the sieve of Grandison House.

Philip was inexpressibly disconcerted. He was fully aware how much he should lose in the estimation of the lady of Hexham, by admitting how little he felt intitled to fulfil her desire; and scarcely less so, how much he should hazard with Lady Grandison by pretending to renew his acquaintance with her, only to present an Irish peeress whom *she* had pronounced v——r!—To what extremities of indignation might not the already offended mother of Lady Anastasia proceed, on so heinous a provocation!

Just, however, as he left Lynchmore's house, lost in wonder how he should extricate himself from the promise extorted from him,—walking with his eyes fixed upon the pavement as though he expected to find sermons in stones, and good in street crossings,—he was startled by a “Hillo! Phil, my boy!”—proceeding from a well-appointed phaeton driven within a *shave* of the kerb-stone by his coaching cousin;—probably on his way to Mansfield Street, where Susan was now as much the object of his daily worship, as Emma of old. For Lord Middlemore seemed to take his cousins in rotation, as if he could not allow himself to be lost to the family.

In order to get out of the crowd certain to gather round Middlemore's equipage wherever it appeared, Philip consented to get *in* to the phaeton.

“You must come with me, Phil, to Grandison House!” cried the ‘peer of many capes,’—as soon as he had captured his prisoner. “The old lady laid violent hands upon me last night, at the opera, to call her chair; only for the opportunity of inveighing against your monstrous ingratitude in not coming near her. If you don't want a spice of what they're trying in Spain,—the *Guerra al cuchillo*,—I recommend you to hasten to her, with your lowest bow.”

Half afraid that he might be the dupe of some silly mystification on the part of one whose *un*-gentle dulness “ever loved a joke,”—and

Risu inepto res ineptior nulla est!—

it proved a considerable relief to Philip, when, on his arrival, Lady Grandison came forward to meet him, almost with open arms.

“I have not seen you these thousand years?” cried she. “Why have you never called here since you came to town?”

The illness of his wife was for once acceptable to Philip, as affording an apology for his neglect.

But Lady Grandison stood in no need of excuses. She had no time to listen.—She wanted to be listened to.—She wanted to talk.—Talking was the great enjoyment of her life.—By her sparkling eyes and eager gestures,—the usual diagnostics of one of her spasms of loquacity,—Philip felt convinced that the De Bayhurst chapter was about to be unfolded in all its sections.

Not a page of it!—Lady Grandison troubled herself no further about dear Stasy, than the proprietor of a house that is over-insured, troubles himself about fire. Instead of resenting her son-in-law’s determination to stay at his country-seat, she considered country-seats the best place for country gentlemen who have neither spirit to push their way into parliament, nor popularity to be triumphantly borne into it on the shoulders of others. That the De Bayhursts were content to abide within their park-palings, proved that they were content with each other;—and as to dissatisfaction on little Saville’s account, the child would afford a charming occupation for Lady Anastasia, till her attention should be occupied by offspring of her own.

Or perhaps, to come nearer the truth, she thought nothing at all about the matter!—She was wild about Spain.—Spain was just then her universe.—Dukes of Norcliffe and Sir Robert de Lacys were fairly obliterated from her memory by the “*Viva el Rey Fernando*” of the Spanish patriots.

Philip was indignant.—Rather would he have found himself required to appear at Lady Grandison’s feet with rope round his neck, after the fashion of the citizens of Calais, than that the bright days of which he had thought the memory substantial, should be so utterly forgotten. He was not prepared to be out of date. To *him*, that gay saloon, with its luxury of *bric à brac* and fragrant exotics, looked like a tomb;—nor could he disengage his eyes from a beautiful portrait by Lawrence, representing dear Stasy in the character of a Sylph,—“new-lighted on some heaven-kissing hill,”—which brought her girlish and aërial beauty only too vividly before him.

On emerging from his reverie, he found Lady Grandison still rattling on, at the pace and with the jingle of a hack postchaise, about the state of affairs in the Peninsula,—guerrillas, juntas, Palafox, Cevallos, Izquierdo, and the Prince of Peace; till any one might have supposed she had been spending her Easter holidays at Bayonne!

“And, by George, they say that, not satisfied with driving the Bourbons from Spain, Boney’s been having a rap at the Pope!” added Lord Middlemore,—who seemed to think that her ladyship had been done Spanish brown. “The last ordinance of the French

governor banished a whole lot of cardinals out of Rome.—Think of living to see the Old Hats jockeyed!—I shall never forget the row there was, when Percy and I bribed a staffiere of the Pope's guard to get into Cardinal Doria Pamfili's stables, during the carnival, and unshoe all his mules. I believe there was a conclave held about it. I'm not certain but we were excommunicated!"

"Were you not enchanted at those dear Arragonese firing up as they have done?"—resumed Lady Grandison,—addressing Philip as though his centaur kinsman were unworthy a rejoinder.—"Think of their sweeping the streets and buying up the apothecaries' shops at Saragossa, to make illicit gunpowder,—like those wretched Irish people with their whisky. It is really *too* interesting!—To be sure, if anything *could* raise the spirit of the nation, it must have been to find the ancient throne of Ferdinand and Isabella desecrated by the obscure younger son of a Corsican attorney!"

"Why, by George, I always fancied your ladyship a staunch advocate of Boney?"—cried the astonished Lord Middlemore.

"You have heard me do justice to his valour as a hero, and genius as a legislator.—But his having converted a distracted republic into a flourishing empire, does not entitle him to drive a legitimate sovereign from a legitimate throne, whose subjects are content with his sovereignty; in order, too, to make way for his thick-headed brother,—a man already known as the Bottle King, and married to a vulgar American!—Conceive a Miss Patterson reigning over the country of the Cid!"

"I always thought it was *Jérôme* Bonaparte, not Joseph, who married the Yankee?"—said Lord Middlemore, looking puzzled.

But Philip, whose attention had been recalled by the word "vulgar" to the object of his visit to Grandison House, seized the opportunity of pleading the cause of Lady Lynchmore.

"Who and what is she?"—inquired her ladyship, after listening graciously to his request for permission to present to her acquaintance one of his country neighbours.

Philip endeavoured to place in their brightest light the aristocratic honours of the Lynchmores.

"Yes, yes—I know all *that*!" interrupted Lady Grandison; "Sir Robert de Lacy's elder brother;—a decided case of bogtrotting;—people ennobled during the present reign,—no standing in the country,—no connexion!—But is she presentable?—Whose set has she lived in?—What is she like?"

"Very like a whale!—interrupted Lord Middlemore, with a hearty laugh; "good living having filled up the copious outline drawn by nature. To do her justice, however, Lady Lynchmore laces herself into the stiffness of a log, rather than betray her natural dimensions. A very painstaking woman, I promise you!—a pretty face though—which I suppose is Philip's reason for applying for her passport into Grandison House."

“Oh, if it be an *affaire de cœur*,” cried Lady Grandison, shrugging her shoulders, “*passe pour la belle comtesse!*—As *Henri Quatre* said of Gabrielle and Bellegarde, ‘*il faut que tout le monde vive!*’”

It was useless for Philip to remonstrate against such a preposterous inference.

“Bring her here when you will,” resumed Lady Grandison, coolly. “To-night, if you like. I have as many people coming to me as yesterday’s fête at Oatlands left alive. It was really *assommant!* Nothing better to amuse one than the sight of the Weybridge people admitted by hundreds into the park to feast upon tea and toast! A tenant’s dinner is bad enough. But ‘God save the King’ from a village band, in honour of a tea-party from the London suburbs, is somewhat meagre entertainment for a royal fête!”

Having purchased indulgence by rewarding with a hollow laugh the flippancy pretending to be wit, Philip ventured to request a formal invitation for Lord and Lady Lynchmore.

“There is an Earl, then, as well as a Countess?” said Lady Grandison, ringing for the groom of the chambers to supply a card of invitation and the visiting card that was to accompany it—“What is he?—Have I ever met him?”

“If you ever *did*,” again interrupted Lord Middlemore, “you no doubt mistook him for Punch, outgrown his show-box and retired as a family man into private life.”

“You must take care not to repeat that excellent jest, next season,” said Philip,—white with anger;—“for his son Lord Delvyn, one of the most spirited young fellows of the day, will then be old enough to call you to account.”

The veto Lady Grandison had been on the point of pronouncing against the Irish Peeress, was suspended by the announcement of her having a spirited son. Lord Delvyn obtained, like Louis XVII., “*grâce pour maman!*”—so strong being the force of habit, that, though dear Stasy was disposed of, her ladyship could not divest herself of her passion for elder sons.—She exacted, however, in presenting Philip with the cards, that he should himself undertake the introduction of the Lynchmores.—The state of Mrs. Askham could not be so critical as to prevent him from spending an hour that evening at Grandison House.

He desired nothing better. Having a pretext in his wife’s illness for appearing there alone, he was glad to forget his harassing discontents in a little excitement.

When, however, having obtained the ready acquiescence of Eske Hill in any project likely to appease the angry Lady Lynchmore, he made his appearance in St. James’s Square, he found that voluminous lady thrown like a dead weight upon his hands. Lord Lynchmore would not hear of being accepted, on such terms, at Grandison House.—Grandison House had never done anything for Ireland; and there was consequently no reason why he should

overlook the etiquette of being formally called upon by the Earl, previous to entering his doors. And having drawn himself up to his utmost stretch of magnanimity, and assumed his hereditary cap of maintenance, the little man looked so much the Earl of Lynchmore, that not an inch of Punch was perceptible!

Though Philip was greatly annoyed at having to make his re-appearance at Grandison House with Lady Lynchmore on his arm, it was simply because restraint of any kind is an obstacle to the enjoyment of a pleasant evening.—An evil result awaited the association, however, for which he was unprepared.

In that circle, the face of Lady Lynchmore was as unknown as that of the veiled Isis at Corinth. The Union had recently propelled into the London world a portion of the provincial Irish nobility, theretofore content to enjoy their winter in Dublin, and summer in Connaught; and among the Castle belles, whose progress in fashionable society had been sorely impeded by want of family connexion, was the stately fair one who, with the port and diamonds of a queen, made her first appearance at Grandison House on the arm of Philip Askham!

As he had not been seen there since his marriage, certain venerable limpets, both fashionable and political, who in the interim had adhered closely to their rock, took it for granted that the lady who accompanied him *must* be his wife; and Lord Middlemore having unluckily overheard such an assertion made by a true blue and buff old admiral, who pronounced the supposed Mrs. Askham to be “a monstrous fine woman,” (probably because she reminded him of the figure-head of a ship,) took especial delight in circulating the rumour through the room.

To the infinite disgust of Philip, therefore, scarcely one of the old friends who claimed his recollection by a bow, but also claimed the favour of a presentation to his wife!—The Duke and Duchess of Sandbeck, with the various branches of the illustrious house of Treby,—the Duke and Duchess of Norcliffe,—*e tutti quanti* of their set, brought successively on their shoulders not only an explanation of the mistake into which they had fallen, but an introduction to the Countess, whom that mistake argued indeed unknown!

Deeply would Lady Lynchmore have deplored such an exposure, in presence of her country neighbour, but that it secured her a bowing acquaintance with certain persons and personages, whose recognition was the grand ambition of her life. And after all, the mistake only proved her to be obscure;—a very minor disgrace to that of being accounted v—r!—

With the exception of this accomplishment of her purposes, she was sadly disappointed in Grandison House.—As she ventured to whisper to Philip (little surmising what was passing concerning her in his mind,) the suite of apartments at the Castle, was twice as fine;—and it needed no asseverations of hers to convince him

that her drawing-rooms in St. James's Square were ten times as showy. For there was *nothing* gorgeous in the belongings of Lady Grandison.—All was subdued;—all in good taste;—all calculated for use and personal enjoyment.—No need of glass shades, or Holland covers.—The furniture, somewhat worn, was somewhat behind the fashion.—The chandeliers were intended to contain lights; not to ornament the rooms.—The tarnished gilding of the picture-frames, though tending to enhance the merit of the paintings, afforded no embellishment to the walls.—The reception rooms, after the Parisian fashion, contained only chairs and sofas,—rididly *en suite*.—No fancy lounging chairs,—no mismatched tables of knick-knackery,—nothing that recalled the curiosity shop, was to be seen.

Nor was the equally harmonious nature of that well-assorted circle more apparent to a woman, reared in ignoble bustle, and accustomed to the heterogeneous mobs of semi-fashionable life.—No high-bred instincts governed her discernment; and where these are wanting, it requires a long apprenticeship fully to understand what a clever French writer calls “*la science encyclopédique des riens,—la connaissance des manéges,—les grandes petites choses,—les musiques des voix et harmonies des couleurs,—les diableries angéliques et innocentes roueries,—le langage et le mutisme,—le sérieux et les railleries,—l'esprit et la bêtise,—la diplomatie et l'ignorance—qui constituent la femme comme il faut;*”—Lady Lynchmore's total ignorance of which, and pretension to the reputation of understanding it, were what really rendered her vulgar!—An uneasy consciousness of plebeian extraction made her uncertain in her opinions, and capricious in her manners; and she was always entangling herself in her court-train, by her awkward endeavours to conceal the foot of clay!

Among those who had watched the entrée of Philip and his companion, was one accustomed to fix the cold scrutiny of his penetrating eye upon all new-comers into his set, and pronounce sentence upon them in epigrams, often concentrating the essence of a volume.—For he was one of those who had only to whisper to the reeds that such a one had the ears of an ass, to have the whisper become a popular rumour.

“*Une parvenue, qui doit encore parvenir!*” said he, after examining her ladyship's artificial deportment.—“I am surprised Askham should have retired into the country.—Such a comedian as his wife requires width of stage.”

“How clever,—how like him!”—cried Lady Grandison, when the *mot* was clumsily repeated to her by Lord Middlemore.

“*Clever?*”—repeated he,—perceiving only the *imbroglio* of persons, produced by his own hoaxing.—“Why he took her for Philip's wife.—It was only a *blunder!*”—

“Not the least in the world, dear spiteful old creature!—per-

sisted Lady Grandison, apt, like all over-sagacious people, to see miles beyond the truth.—“He took her for her sister-in-law, the actress, Lady de Lacy!—And a woman of *her* size, certainly *does* require width of stage!”—

Fortunately for Philip, the Duchesses of Norcliffe and Sandbech,

A pair of friends, though one was young,
And t’other seventy-two,

were alike addicted to early hours; for the moment *they* departed, Lady Lynchmore took to flight, as hurriedly as Cinderella.—She could not better regulate *her* departure than by the dial of Duchesses!—

Having hastened to place her in the carriage, he was able to return to the party, and await in peace the coming of Bob Hardyng; who had promised, if the House were up in reasonable time, to rejoin him at Grandison House: and if not, to send his carriage, that Philip might meet him at the House of Commons.

“For now came in the sweet of the night” for Philip!—In that house, it was the custom when the great personages retired, for the pleasant persons to remain awhile,—as the lively afterpiece follows the serious drama,—to chat, where they had talked before, and laugh where they had smiled.—Amid the general hilarity, accordingly, the old *habitué* prepared himself to enjoy, unobserved and unimpeded, the thrill of pleasure produced, after long estrangement, by the atmosphere of the gay world; an atmosphere of light, and warmth, and fragrance where the rustling of every silken robe attests the presence of beauty, and the joyous modulation of every well-attuned voice, the golden influence of prosperity.

In such a scene, a thousand courteous words beset the ear,—a thousand graceful forms, the eye,—a thousand perfumes, emitted by precious flowers or the still more penetrating aroma created by the luxurious toilet of a well-dressed woman, the bewildered senses.—Snatches of amusing conversation brightened with bonmots and news, (the gathering of the morning’s growth of the forcing-houses of the clubs,) tones of blandishment or gestures of conciliation such as it requires the schooling of years, and perhaps the hereditation of centuries, to modify into the tact that constitutes good breeding; these, and a thousand nameless and harmonious enhancements that pall upon the taste by force of habit, assume an inexpressible charm to one long submitted to the drawling, self-sufficing inanity of a neighbourhood like Edenbourne; where nothing is said that was not said, six weeks before, in London;—and nothing thought, but was thought sixty years ago, by our grandmothers!—

Philip Askham gave himself up to the luxury of that congenial atmosphere, till his contracted nerves relaxed, and his irritable nature was subdued. The good breeding of the spot begat a sort of dreamy beatitude.—*That* was his sphere!—Those artificial

lights constituted his sunrise,—those perfumes *his* “breath of morn!”

There, on the very spot where he was lounging, had he often loitered for hours by the side of Lady Anastasia;—watching the expansion of her smiles, as we watch the unfolding of a flower, to catch the first emanation of its fragrance; or the quickened pulsation which, as her young heart beat with pleasure, caused the light curls to vibrate on her cheek, or the lighter tissue of her robe, to tremble.—How lovely she was in those days of *naïve* and unsuspecting girlhood!—The mysterious voice of nature was murmuring in her heart, as in some silvery sea-shell cast upon a tropic shore. How limpid all her looks and thoughts,—how sparkling her words and glances!—And, dearer than every other attraction,—how perceptibly had her accents ever softened, when addressed to his ungrateful self!

And this pearl of price,—this glowing gem,—this high-bred, gracious, lovely, loving creature, had he presumed to disdain; because accident had previously thrown him into a mail-coach with a faded widow and her family, on their way to struggle on a miserable pittance against the obscurity of a vulgar lot, too happy to warm their wretchedness under his mantle!—It must have been the contrariety of a perverse nature,—it must have been the mere desire of thwarting his father and mother, which had induced him to cling to such a choice!—

As the relapsed egotist fixed his eyes wistfully on Lawrence's portrait of his rejected love, the remembrance of Evelyn's woe-begone visage beset him, like a case of conscience, or a reminiscence from the tomb. In such a scene, how thoroughly was it out of place; whereas the beaming countenance and aërial form of Lady Anastasia, harmonized only too gracefully with every surrounding object.

From Afric or the Persian looms,
The carpet's silken foliage sprung,
And heaven, in its blue bounty, flung
Those starry leaves, and azure blooms;

while *above* them, smiled a face bright as some Eastern houri, or the angel of a poet's dream.

“Hillo, Phil, my boy!—what the deuce have you done with your new wife?”—cried Lord Middlemore, throwing himself unceremoniously upon the ottoman on which his cousin was musing.—

“If you mean Lady Lynchmore,—she is gone home.”

“Gone home, *Judy*-ciously,—to her Punch, eh?—Poor soul,—I thought she'd never be able to stand it!”

“Stand *what*?—The annoyance of your stupid hoax?”

“No! the vexation of the Prince's whisking in and out, like a meteor! To see him address to every woman present, in succession, one of his little taking words,—the pearls and diamonds that

drop from his lips, (the gift of course, like the girl's in the story-book, of a fairy godmother,—for I never saw the shop where they were bought,)—and then, just as he was approaching *her*, with the chance that one of those basilisk glances she has been aiming at him for this year past, might tempt him to seek an introduction,—for Lady Grandison to throw her casting net over his head, and carry him off *vi et armis* into the boudoir, to be bored into a state of stupor by her usual mish-mash of Godoy, Cevallos, Murat, and Izquierdo,—an olla podrida more Spanish than in Spain!”—

“The Prince came here only for a moment, on his way to Lady Perth's.—It was natural he should bestow it on the lady of the house.”

“Natural perhaps,—but, by George, Lady Lynchmore's face was a study for Hogarth!” cried Middlemore, rolling on the ottoman, convulsed with irrepressible mirth. “Except that of a poulterer's boy who watched me this morning through Grange's window, while I ate my ice,—his mouth watering as he stood grilling in the sun,—hang me if I ever saw such longing looks!”

“As during the Prince's stay, Lady Lynchmore happened to be in the other room, on my arm, engaged in conversation with Horace Trevor——”

“To be sure!” interrupted Middlemore; “and as his Royal Highness nodded *en passant* to Trevor and yourself, did you see his dead point at the foot and *chaussure* of Mrs. Askham the second? By George, what an eye he has for a hoof,—and how he *does* hate a *parvenue*!—Do you remember what he said to Otto?”—

“Nothing so dangerous, my dear Middlemore, as a recanted antipathy!” observed Bob Hardyng, —who, having arrived from the House, and paid his compliments to Lady Grandison, had placed himself unobserved by their side. “Remember, too, that one of the greatest heroes of antiquity was smashed at last by a shellfish!—*I* bet on the lady!—Women who have an object to accomplish wait so patiently; *et tout vient à point à qui peut attendre*!”

“In that case, who knows but *you* may fall in love with Lady Grandison, if you live long enough;—or Phil here, with dear Stasy, whose picture he has been staring out of countenance for the last half hour!” cried Lord Middlemore, to whom the new-comer was an object of detestation.—

“Quite as likely as that the Prince would submit to be converted into a *savonnette à vilain*!” retorted Hardyng.—“Petrel! how are you?—What ages since we met!” continued he, breaking off his conversation with the coaching lord, to lay hands on the necromancer by whose drop of aqua fortis the robes of estate of Lady Lynchmore had been so speedily worn into a hole, and who was gliding silently by them, like a shadow of the past.

“*Ages*, my dear sir?—You must measure time like the six days of creation, by some mightier luminary than the sun of our mother

earth!" replied the poet of unalterable countenance. "There is a prodigious difference between *your* age and mine!"

"And what do you think of Marmion?" cried Hardyng, who was fresh from the first perusal of that stirring Romaunt.

"The death-rattle of an expiring literature!" responded the oracle.—"An armoury of tin foil.—Better the worst six lines of Pope, than six cantos of such jingle!"—

"I have heard people of the old school prefer the worst likeness by Reynolds, to yonder beautiful portrait," said Bob. "And after every new victory of Napoleon, Henry Askham never fails to crush him under Cyrus the Great. Natural enough, I am afraid! '*Naturaliter audita visis laudamus libentius; et præsentia invidia, præterita veneratione prosequimur; et his non obrui, illis instrui credimus,*' says a wiser man, my dear Petrel, than all of us put together."

"For *my* part, I look on Marmion as the neigh of a new Pegasus!" interrupted Middlemore.—"By George! what a fight scene!—One hears the clash of swords, and sees the sparks fly!"

"God forbid that I should deny my obligation to *any* thing that makes the *sparks* fly!" rejoined Petrel, with his usual deliberate articulation, and sarcastic tone.

"But surely, Mr. Petrel, the poetry of Walter Scott may be regarded as the revival of romance?"—remonstrated Philip Askham, addressing the public executioner.

"Yes? a *revival*,—and old garments revived are seldom very lustrous," rejoined Petrel, who, on the way to his carriage loved to make his passage strike terror, like the transit of the rattlesnake.

"At all events, thank God the success of Marmion, tends to prove that the poetical spirit is not altogether extinct among us!" retorted Hardyng,—provoked by his impassibility.

"No thanks, at least, my dear sir, to *you* Edinburgh Reviewers!"—rejoined the great imperturbable. "You were the first to cast the Muse into the streets, like the Levite his concubine; and, like *him*, affect indignation at finding her dead and dishonoured on your threshold!—Good night!"

"Petrel is as good as a glass of absynth, to stimulate one's digestion!" exclaimed Hardyng, drawing a deep breath after his departure. "Anacreon lived to be eighty, and died by a grapestone.—Who bets that Petrel at a century old, is not choked by the hardness of one of his own epigrams?—But blessed be the Muses, or Graces,

here comes wand'ring by,

A spirit like an angel,

to take the bitter taste out of one's mouth! It is like looking at a rose after a root of hellebore!"

"A Parma violet rather than a rose," said Philip, as the young

and lovely Lady C— —r glided past. “Nothing glaring or showy in such refined sweetness as *hers*!

Like summer twilights, still and sapphire skies,
Beams the clear lustre of those cloudless eyes.”

“And that soft smile of radiant Emily’s!” added Hardyng, provokingly,—amused by his brother-in-law’s unwonted enthusiasm. But

Such highflown verse suits not your grovelling pen, sir,
Leave it to Petrel, or to William Spencer!”

“I won’t swear to the *goodness* of his poetry, though, by George, I can to its *truth*!” cried Middlemore. “But I say, Phil, my boy!—how monstrous lucky that the most high-bred woman in England didn’t arrive before the bustling exit of your friend Lady Lynchmore! She might have died of the concussion, as the beautiful humming birds fall dead in a West Indian shooting party, from the mere report of the guns!”

“Are you ready to be off, Phil?” inquired Hardyng, eager to find his horses’ heads turned towards Eske Hill. “The party is getting thin. We might almost address those who are left, like the Italian *padre* his congregation, as *Pochissimi Signori*!”

Starting up at the summons, Philip obeyed the call;—right thankful that his brother-in-law was too much fatigued by his parliamentary *séance*, or too absorbed in returning to his happy home, to note the deep sigh with which he took his long last leave of Grandison House!

CHAPTER XXII.

Muchos siglos de hermosura,
En pocos asios de edad.

GONGORA.

She died, as fading roses die,
Although the warm and healing air
Comes breathing forth to wrap them round;
She died,—and left me to despair!—
I placed her gently in the lead,—
I smoothed her hair as it should be;—
And breathed a promise to the dead,—
A secret—twixt my soul and me!—

BARRY CORNWALL.

The desire of poor Evelyn to be with her children was becoming so painfully intense, that she at length obtained the support of the Hardynges to her petition to return home by easy journeys, with her servants. Philip had business in town that must detain him at least a fortnight; and Emma was secretly of her sister-in-law’s opinion, that a short separation might be beneficial to both.

It was not very difficult to obtain the assent of Philip, whose taste for the pleasures of the metropolis was now thoroughly revived; and when she was gone, or rather, when they had tidings of her safe arrival at Eden Castle, he surrendered himself without restraint to social enjoyment. Established in a London hotel, (for the better despatch of business!) and emancipated from the *surveillance* of the Hardynges, his days and nights flew by on noiseless wings; nor could Lesly, or Trevor, or any of his former associates, overlook the very different means of enjoyment he commanded as a country gentleman with five thousand a year, and as an official man with eight hundred.

By his wife, meanwhile, a painful task was accomplishing. Her condition was clearly before her;—nor did she shrink from the contemplation.—Her mother's early death, and her own delicate health, had prepared her to die early; and it was the consciousness of having to perform the most stringent duty of maternity,—the protection of fatherless children,—which, evoking supernatural energies of mind and body, had hitherto nerved her to support the struggle of life.

But *now* all was over!—Extenuated by a long course of suffering and persecution, the last blow struck at her heart was fatal. Like Cæsar, on recognizing the ungrateful dagger of Brutus, she covered her head with her mantle, and prepared to die in peace.

In *peace*?—no, *not* in peace!—There was much to render departure difficult!—Content to go,—there were those whom it was terrible to leave behind. That helpless infant—that gentle, loving, promising Selina, whose lovely face was already grave with cares that should have been foreign to her young heart,—with *these*,—how hard to part!—How was she to leave them to the rough usage of a world, which to herself,—so wholly inoffensive,—had strewn the path of life with thorns!

Wise, from the schooling of much trouble, Evelyn had learned how much less positive than we suppose is the action of years on the human mind. She saw that the same providence which left the prosperous Lord Lynchmore a boy at fifty, had made (at scarcely ten) almost a woman of her ill-fated child. Having long marked with thankfulness the perfect discretion of her Selina,—her strong sense of duty,—her warm sense of affection,—she recognised in her one of those elect natures, whose impulses are from above.

As she gazed into those calm reflective eyes, so often fixed on her pale face till blinded by tears, she tried to search into that little heart, to attain its rich treasury of good,—to fathom its powers of endurance, its depths of tenderness. *Not* from a mother's pride, which so often suggests similar investigations. It was necessary to ascertain the strength of the vessel in which her last earthly hopes were to be embarked!

But though, like the needle that conveys life and death to the mariner, trembling in her task, salvation was in the result! Her time was short. But she trusted it might suffice to perfect the strength of that young mind, and nerve the courage of the child for tasks so much beyond her age as were about to be assigned her.

It was a trying moment, however, to the mother; a trying moment—a terrible moment—when, one summer evening at dusk, the better to conceal her emotions, she called the little girl to her sofa-side, and, with careful preparation, tried to lead the way to the grievous announcement of her precarious state. As if *any* amount of preparation, *any* tenderness of speech, could overcome for Selina the shock of learning that her dearly-loved mother was on the verge of the grave;—that they were to part,—that she was to be left alone,—alone with that harsh stepfather!

“No! not alone, my child!” faltered the tender mother, wringing between her own the little hands that clung to her, and pressing to her heart the little sobbing face that hid itself in her bosom.

“Not alone, Selina! There is one over whose infancy you must watch, as tenderly as I watched over your own. There is one you must love for me,—one you must make, like yourself, all that a mother’s fondness could desire! Promise me this, my child! Promise me that, when I am gone, you will devote yourself to that hapless creature who will so much need your care and affection! Edward is gone,—Edward is safe. Prosperity is to be *his* portion, (God be with him, and grant that it may not harden his heart!) But this feeble, friendless little one, my Selina—”

“I understand you, dearest mother,—I understand you!” cried the child, closing with fervent kisses the lips of the poor invalid, lest the effects of all this emotion should prove too much for her wasted frame. “Do not say another word. It kills you to talk,—it kills you to shed these bitter tears,—dearest, dearest mother, I understand you.—He shall be mine,—my own dear child! I will be to him what you have been to me;—as far as God will let me,—for it can only be *His* will that makes such mothers.—Do not be afraid.—Let that trouble be off your mind.—Only teach me,—only show me. I will spare no endeavours to be taught!”

She pleaded to unconscious ears. Overcome by the effort of unburthening her mind, and the joy of being so instantly understood, her poor mother had fainted.

From that day, without a word of further explanation on either side, all was perfectly understood between the child-woman and the woman who was rapidly sinking into the feebleness of a child. Every morning, Selina accompanied Susan and her nursling to her mother’s bed-side; listening to her instructions, and watching with eager eyes the progress of the feeble babe; and every afternoon, when the invalid was well enough to rise and be placed on her sofa, Selina brought her little chair close beside her mother’s

pillow, to listen to every word that fell from her lips when she was able to speak; or watch her eyes, whenever they gently unclosed, lest she should lose the smallest, slightest, faintest indication of the will of her who was soon to manifest her will no longer.

To children, the grave is usually too incomprehensible a mystery to be terrible. That those who are here to-day, disappear to-morrow, strikes them no more than any common departure on a journey. But Selina had been more painfully instructed. Selina, having seen tears shed for weeks and months and years, over the image of one who, because he was dead, returned no more,—understood the full force of the evil awaiting her.—The darling mother before her was going to Heaven; while Earth,—the earth of the friendless,—was to be her bitter portion.

Was not this cruel consciousness sufficient to account for the premature intelligence that suddenly expanded in her mind, and imparted so supernatural an expression to her features? For had any stranger witnessed unseen those whispered colloquies between the mother and child,—the mother, with her finely-chiselled features pale as marble, save where through her wan temples the blue veins became daily more perceptible,—the child, with her inspired face, grave and holy as a seraph's,—they would scarcely have believed them to be creatures of this world!

One evening—a glowing midsummer evening, when the whole face of nature was irradiated by the glory of the setting sun—Evelyn caused her sofa to be drawn closer to the open window, to enjoy the balminess of the atmosphere, and the fragrance of the flower-garden and new-mown lawn. It was just such weather as makes it hard to die, for those whose hearts are still susceptible of earthly hopes,—so bright is this lower world with the beauty of a happier sphere. And when the infant (now nearly a year old, so that, but for its constitutional feebleness, it was of an age to recognise those by whom it was habitually caressed,) was brought to receive her blessing for the night, so genial was the influence of that beaming sunshine, that, almost for the first time, it smiled in her face, and extended its little arms towards her.—Then burst forth the agony of a mother's tears!—A new tie to life seemed developed in that simple token of love.

The gentle whispers and soothing caresses of Selina gradually restored her to her better self; inspiring mutual consolation,—mutual peace,—mutual hope of purer joys to come,—mutual reliance on the promise of a Word that endureth for ever and ever.—But no more of this! Tears such as were shed between them, endearments such as were exchanged, ought to be sacred from all human scrutiny—yea, sacred as the mysteries of the garden of Gethsemane, which were to afford an example of resignation to ages and nations to come!

All this time, poor Evelyn was replying to the letters of her sel-

fish husband, which insisted strongly on the claims of his business in London, and slightly on his pleasures, by cheerful answers encouraging the prolongation of his stay. Aware that remedies were unavailing in a state like hers, (for *she*, alas! had watched the gradual expiring of a frame shaken and exhausted as her own,) she declined the further attendance of Dr. Boswell;—so that as there was no one to betray to Philip the real state of her suffering, she assured him she was in no need of a physician.

She was only ill enough to die! Her weakness now increased so perceptibly, that the little girl, though careful to avoid alarming him whose absence was a relief to both, despatched a letter to her brother, in her own little round childish handwriting, (it was long since that poor mother had been able to continue her *ordinary* lessons!) entreating that Edward would obtain leave from his uncle to come and visit the dear mamma from whom he had been six months parted,—“she was so very *very* ill!” And soon, alas! came back an answer, far more expertly indited, but conveying a bitter disappointment to Selina; who counted on having secured an unexpected moment of happiness for the invalid.

“His uncle assured him that mamma could not possibly be *very* ill, since Mr. Askham was amusing himself at all the gay parties in town; which being the case, he would much rather come to Eden Castle in the autumn; because all summer they were to have cricket matches twice a week in the park at Bayhurst, established by his uncle’s kindness expressly for his amusement.”

On this grievous occasion, a first proof was afforded by Selina, that the lessons of her mother were not thrown away. Repressing the tears elicited by so terrible an evidence of the unaffectionate nature of her brother, she hastily destroyed the letter. She would not for worlds have had it fall into her mother’s hands. She could *now* perfectly appreciate the influence of such unkindness on a mother’s heart!

Many days afterwards, Selina was shocked to perceive a strange alteration in the countenance of the poor invalid on receiving her London letters. Though comparatively well and tranquil shortly before, when the baby, after wailing its usual fretful hour on its mother’s bosom, had been removed to the nursery for the night,—her breath became suddenly oppressed after the arrival of the post.

Till eight o’clock, Selina was usually allowed to sit up in her mother’s dressing-room, to participate in the news of “Papa.” Not that his proceedings had now much interest for the child. But she retained a hope that, through *him*, tidings might reach them of her brother; on whose part, some after-remorse of feeling might perhaps prompt an application to his uncle for permission to visit Eden Castle.

Still, *still* disappointment! No news of Edward, —no letter

from Bayhurst! and Mrs. Askham refolded her own with a trembling hand scarcely able to perform its office, without uttering even the usual announcement of—"Papa is well. Business detains him in town.—He will probably be home next week."

Something wild and unusual in the expression of her eyes, however, induced Selina, instead of rising at that signal to retire according to her wont, to draw closer to her mother's sofa, and press to her lips the cold thin hand of the invalid. By degrees, as she held it between her own, she felt its pulses quicken, and its reviving warmth accelerate even to fever heat.—At length, in a broken, hollow voice, her mother, whose face was averted, incoherently addressed her.

"My child," said she,—“my own dear child,—before you leave me to-night, I have a promise to exact of you.”

“Mother!”

“You must pledge me your word, darling Selina, that, when I am gone, come what may,—unwelcome as you may find yourself in this house,—warmly as you may be invited to Bayhurst,—nothing shall induce you to desert your little brother!”

“Nothing, dear mother, nothing!” answered the child, as steadily as her little breaking heart would allow.

“My poor Percy will grow up weak, ill-favoured, peevish, perhaps deformed. No one will care for him,—not even his father!—Promise me, therefore, Selina, that—”

“My own dear mother, have I not already promised?” faltered the little girl, imprinting a thousand fervent kisses on the hand she held.

“You have,—you have!—But at *your* age, the temptation of kind words,—of a brighter home”

“No,—no,—no!”—was all that poor Selina could utter in interruption.

“The pleasure, then, of being with Edward!”

And this time, the little girl answered not a word; but had her mother beheld the emotions sparkling in her eye and quivering round her lips, on merely hearing the name of the ingrate, she would have perceived that such a condition was superfluous!

“I may rely then,” murmured the poor sufferer, “on your word before our Almighty judge, that Eden Castle shall remain your home, and Philip Askham your father?”

Thus solemnly addressed, the little girl, suddenly dropping on her knees, placed gently on her head the trembling hand of the invalid.

“Bless me,” faltered she,—“bless me and *trust* me! So long as I live, will I obey the bidding of my dear mother, as sacredly as the commandments of my God.”

Fervent were the words of benediction then breathed by Evelyn; and fervent was the kiss of love that sealed that sacred covenant;

—a long long kiss, in which the soul of the dying woman seemed concentrated.—And then, she dismissed the child to bed.

“She wanted to be quiet,—she wanted to be alone.”

She wanted to be alone only that she might re-examine that cruel letter of Philip, which had stricken her death-blow.

“I cannot understand,” wrote her husband, “why you persist in treating me with such deliberate hypocrisy. You write me word you are better, and desire I will make no haste to return home, (as if you thought my business here a pretext, to be hurried or retarded as I please,) and then, amuse yourself by writing to your son the most deplorable accounts of your health.

“Last night, Lady Grandison was unable to repress her surprise at meeting me at the Duchess of Norcliffe’s, because, forsooth, a letter from Lady Anastasia had given her to understand, *on your own showing*, that your state was precarious! This must have been done, on your part, solely to place my conduct in an odious light.—You doubtless wish people to suppose that *you* are dying at Eden Castle, while I am diverting myself in town!—All I could do in self-justification to the Grandisons, was to take your letter of yesterday from my pocket, and prove that the double-dealing was not on *my* side.

“In order, however, to frustrate all further attempts at deception, I have written by this post to Boswell, desiring him, if not for your satisfaction, for mine, to visit you; and favour me with a bulletin on the veracity of which I can depend. It is too unfair that I should be exposed to unjust reproaches, only that you may excite the commiseration of those people at Bayhurst!”

On the second perusal of this cruel letter, a hectic spot burnt on the cheek of Mrs. Askham. But not a tear did she shed!—Her grievances against that man were now past weeping for.—She could only pray to God to forgive him.—She had already forgiven him herself!

When assisted to her pillow for the night, she was observed to experience so much pain from even that slight exertion, that her attendant was alarmed. Twice, on her way from the dressing-room to the adjoining chamber, she was obliged to pause for breath; and as soon as the young woman could leave her, she hastened to consult with Susan about the propriety of sending for Dr. Boswell.

“Time enough in the morning,” said Evelyn, faintly smiling, when they applied for her permission to despatch a servant to Edenbourne.—“Mr. Askham has written to desire he will call here to-morrow. All I want, is rest. It would disturb me were Dr. Boswell to come to-night.”

They contented themselves, therefore, with resolving that the attendant, who usually slept in the adjoining chamber, should keep watch during the night.”

But a more vigilant eye watched over Evelyn, and a more merciful hand protected her! Before morning, she was at rest.—When, towards daybreak, the woman stole on tiptoe into the room, it struck her that the sleep of the sufferer, usually restless, was quieter than usual; and on drawing aside the curtain, she saw that the pillow was saturated with blood, and her mistress expiring!

Before the fleetest horse in the stable could bring the physician to her aid, all was over! But though Dr. Boswell was loud in his expressions of indignation at not having been sooner called in, he admitted the hemorrhage to be so extensive, that, even on the spot, his assistance must have been ineffectual.

On the discovery of her hopeless condition, old Susan, perceiving from the expression of her loving eyes that, though speechless, her mistress was still sensible, hastened to bring the children to her bedside, for a last farewell. Reckless in her untaught distraction, of the effect a sight so fearful might produce on the young mind of Selina, she allowed her to witness the last yearning kiss imprinted by the dying mother on the forehead of her infant.—It left a crimson stain!—a stain which Selina, when the babe was placed in her arms by the nurse that she might support the head of her dying mistress, gently wiped away with a handkerchief which she placed in her little swelling bosom, to be preserved as a sacred token for ever and ever.

On beholding the eyes of their gentle mistress closed in death, the first idea of the horror-struck servants was to despatch an express for their master, as they had seen *him* do, the preceding year, for Mrs. Hardyng. But as the London post was to start in an hour, Dr. Boswell decided that, since all was now unavailing, it would convey the grievous intelligence with sufficient speed.

The following morning, therefore, Mr. Askham was enjoying till a late hour the sleep usually allotted to those whom dissipation detains till daybreak from their beds, with that fatal letter still lying unopened. Nothing in its outward appearance enjoined haste; and even when Philip rose and saw it on the dressing-table, where it had been laid by the servant, concluding it to be an answer from Boswell to his letter of the preceding day, he deliberately finished dressing, before he broke the seal. In the interim, he had received a letter from Evelyn, which set his mind at ease; and so intensely was he absorbed at that moment by reminiscences of a brilliant ball he had enjoyed at the Duchess of Norcliffe's, the preceding night, that he had not a second thought for Eden Castle.

Even after running his eye over the lines, their purport seemed at first to escape him. Yet the announcement was surely sufficiently explicit.

“Sir,

“It is my painful duty to inform you that Mrs. Askham departed

this life at thirteen minutes past seven o'clock, this morning, from the rupture of one of the great vessels of the heart. Waiting your commands, I have the honour to be

“Your most obedient humble servant,

“ARCH. BOSWELL.

“*Eden Castle, June 13th.*”

Dead?—Beyond all reach of aid or atonement?—Where,—where—was he to look for mercy or consolation!—

Overwhelmed as he was,—overwhelmed as *any* human being must have been by such a blow,—and though the speed of his journey homewards was such as might have bewildered the mind of a man even less severely visited, so that on reaching the “dreary pile,” his deportment was scarcely that of a rational being,—Philip Askham retained sufficient use of his faculties to render the night of torture, spent upon his knees beside the bed where lay extended the cold remains of his wife, almost a sufficient expiation for his guilt.

It was with the fixed sweet smile of the enshrouded Evelyn before his eyes, that he perused the letter he found addressed to him in her desk; a solemn letter,—perhaps the more heart-rending for containing no appeal to his feelings or a single syllable of reproach.

As if she thought him inaccessible to any touch of human affection, she wrote to recall to his sense of honour his promise regarding the guardianship of Selina;—to recommend his sickly babe to his forbearance;—to entreat that Susan might be retained in charge of both the children.—And then, she bade him a long farewell; but not so tenderly as to imply that his conduct placed him in peculiar need of forgiveness.

But oh! how he now implored it of her senseless form!—How he bowed down his head upon her marble feet!—How he called upon her to breathe again one blessed moment,—that she might witness his remorse,—that she might hear the avowal of his heartless egotism, that she might accept his pledge to become more than a father to her children,—that she might murmur one word of pardon, ere she winged her flight to everlasting peace!—

When Selina was brought to him, (*brought* is the fitting word, for the little creature was unable to come into his presence,) he fell down before her, as though she were the living representative of the dead; beseeching forgiveness of his ingratitude,—forgiveness for his accursed hardness of heart!—

Mr. Askham was informed that custom interdicted his appearance as chief mourner at his wife's funeral. At that moment, perhaps, he felt that he had had enough of custom!—At all events, he chose to go, as a public act of atonement; and that the afflicted child should accompany him, holding him by the hand.

He was assured that Selina was too young for such a scene. It

needed only to point out the self-governed composure of her grief, to prove that age is not always to be measured by years.

“Let him have his way! Let the child behold her poor mother laid in the grave,” faltered Emma, who, with her husband, had hastened to the house of mourning. “The impression cannot be fatal; and if less than fatal, will be a lesson for life!”

On the appointed day, a great multitude surrounded the church at Edenbourne, to add their tears to those of the privileged mourners; and with difficulty did the sorrowing old rector get through the funeral service. But the crowd consisted less of the retainers of Eden Castle than of the humble pensioners of Eastfield; for some of whom she had worked, with others prayed, when her humble fortune admitted no other assuagement of their miseries;—prayers and labours of more account to her *now*, than the alms-giving of her more ostentatious home!

There was one individual present, however, whose coming was unnoted, and of whose anguish none took heed;—a spare old man, attired in the deepest mourning; who, in a remote corner of the church, concealed his face with his hands while the funeral rites were proceeding; and, when the train of mourners quitted the church, purchased leave of those in authority to descend into the family vault, and breathe his last farewell to the dead!

“Would to God that I had died for thee, Evelyn,” said he, as he knelt with clasped hands beside her coffin;—“would, would to God that I had died for thee, or that thou couldst hear my solemn vow to be a protector to thy orphan child!”

But there was another, whose absence from the solemn ceremony was generally noticed. Notwithstanding the intelligence despatched by the Hardynges to Bayhurst Hall, no Edward made his appearance.

“Master Saville ought to be *here*,—Master Saville ought to be *here*!” moaned the faithful old Susan, as she sat rocking in her arms the fretful infant, bewailing itself as if instinctively conscious of having lost its only friend.

To *her* it was no excuse that, by a disastrous coincidence, “the dangerous illness of his uncle rendered it impossible for him at that moment to leave home.”

And thus, within a year of the removal of the fatal achievement from the castle gates, which afforded so sad an omen for Evelyn on her marriage-day, it was replaced by a new ensign of mourning; again reminding the spectator that rich and poor must die, and that “In Heaven there is peace!”

But those most attached to the lost one gone before, studiously averted their eyes.—It was mockery to be reminded that “*In cælo quies*,” while such arduous and complicated duties remained for them to accomplish on earth!

CHAPTER XXIII.

Ægritudinem laudare, unam rem maxime detestabilem quorum est tandem philosophorum?

CICERO.

Comme l'existence ressemble, partout, à l'existence. En tout lieu, tout le monde attend quelque chose qui n'arrive jamais. On regarde fixement le rivage, comme si un vaisseau chargé de bonheur, venu on ne sait d'où, était sur le point d'entrer au port. Fatigué d'attendre, quelques-uns vont au-devant de cette arche mystérieuse, et ne reviennent plus!

GOZLAN.

More than two years elapsed after the death of Philip Askham's lamented wife, undistinguished by the occurrence of any memorable event at Eden Castle. The sadness of deep mourning pervaded the place, nor was it possible to wear his broad hems with more studied propriety than the widower. His nature *seemed* to have profited by the shock it had sustained; for he was better father, master, neighbour, for having proved so indifferent a husband.

Thanks to the vigilance of Susan and tender care of Selina, the poor child denounced from its birth as unrearable, was still alive. But though affording constant grounds for anxiety and commiseration, so far from remaining an object of disgust to its surviving parent, as much indulgence was conceded to the future representative of the House of Askham, as was compatible with the condition of an ever-ailing child.

In that weary interim, Seline had progressed in grace, intelligence, and beauty, as though there were still a dear mother to delight in her advancement! An excellent governess presided over her education; Sir Hugh having assigned to her use the interest of her mother's fortune, which, on Mrs. Saville's second marriage, was settled on the children. Though he chose to encumber the hands of the man he hated by the guardianship of his niece, no need that, while her brother was enjoying the distinctions appropriate to the heir of Bayhurst, Selina should become dependent on the Askhams!

In every respect, the condition of the little girl was meliorated. Whenever Philip was tempted from his retreat, to visit Uppingham Manor, Eske Hill, or Hurstwood Castle, his sisters conditioned that Selina and her little charge should be his companions; not alone from compassion towards the forlornness of the little orphan, but from the charm exercised by her engaging manners on every one who approached her.

In Selina Saville, her mother's gentle gravity was united with all the lighter graces of childhood. An angelic expression tempered

her sweet smile; and it was discriminatingly pointed out by Sir Thomas Lawrence, when he obtained permission, one autumn at Uppingham Manor, to add that exquisite head to his collection of sketches, that her long wavy hair, of the deepest auburn, seemed to emit a superhuman lustre, like that of some youthful saint in the pictures of Murillo.

Among the persons kindest in their attentions to her, was Lady Lynchmore; and though the desire to conciliate a friend of Lady Grandison and protégé of Carlton House, might be the inostensible motive of her eager invitations to the motherless child, Philip was too well aware of the advantage of female companionship to a young girl, not to profit by the hospitalities of his neighbours.

The De Lacys were frank, warm-hearted girls: Lady Emilia, the eldest, being now presented, and a beauty. But of the half-dozen, two were nearly the age of Selina Saville; and by all of them, she was made a sort of pet at the Hall. There were no Jouvencières there now, to discredit the taste of its owners; and the detection of the real vocation of the soi-disant émigrés had so placed the Countess on her guard, that, even with the certainty of deterioration to their minuets and gavottes, she contented herself with consigning the education of her daughters to a well-informed English-woman; under whose care they ran some risk of becoming nothing better than excellent mothers of families.

Selina was very happy among them. The De Lacys loved her like a sister. They were even fond of poor little Percy for her sake,—and never passed old Susan without a kindly word,—or alluded without sorrowful deference to the memory of her mother. It was impossible to feel otherwise than affectionately towards such thoughtful friends; and so long as Lord Delvyn was not at home to molest her by his boisterous pleasures, enjoyed with all the privilege of an eldest son spoiled by both father and mother, she was never better pleased than with the days spent at Hexham Hall. Lord Lynchmore was good-natured and mirth-loving as ever; and even the foibles of his lady were diminished by the attainment of a securer footing in society;—her artificial dignity having relaxed since her intimacy with Lady Grandison superseded all apprehension of being black-balled by the fashionable world.

Nothing could exceed the present popularity of the family. Lady Emilia was handsome and unaffected, Lord Delvyn one of the leading young men at Oxford; and, thanks to Lord Lynchmore's liberal assistance, the Carlton hounds were attaining a celebrity worthy the excellence of the country they had to run. Hexham, in short, possessed sufficient attractions for those whose society confers lustre on a country house, to overlook the distance of Edenbourne from the metropolis. While Eden Castle had become indeed a "dreary pile," the pleasantness of the Hall was proverbial.

All this was fortunate for Philip; who, as the first thing a man

does who is at issue with himself, is usually to quarrel with his fellow-creatures, might otherwise have become an indolent misanthrope. But on a man like Lord Lynchmore, coldness or reserve was thrown away. To decline his invitations on the score of mental affliction, or any other score, was labour lost! Without delicacy of mind to perceive when his civilities were unacceptable, he persisted and persisted, till he bored Philip into becoming his guest solely to get rid of him; and once his guest, the cheerfulness of Hexham insured return.

For Philip Askham was still too young for his self-love to take the form of supineness. At one-and-thirty, he was far more attractive than at twenty-one; the regular line of his features according better with his present figure and deportment. Strangers pronounced him to be a remarkably handsome man; while those with whom he thought it worth while to form an intimacy, cited him as a remarkably agreeable one.

But if the history of the house of Askham remained uneventful, memorable indeed were the events which had marked in the interval the progress of public life. Overcome by domestic vexations and national misfortunes, the venerable King was once more a prey to the terrible disorder by which the nation had been already deprived of his protection; while the popularity of the Prince of Wales was already grievously modified by the mistrust about to involve the political career of the Prince Regent.

Nor was the position of the country much more satisfactory than that of its rulers. Cintra, Corunna, Walcheren, are names inscribed in the darker pages of our national history.—The kingdom of Hanover was annexed to that of Westphalia under the sceptre of a minor Bonaparte; the throne of Sweden filled by a *parvenu* soldier of the Republic. The empire of the new Cæsar mightier than all the twelve, included Rome, Paris, and Amsterdam, among its cities. But above all, a princess of the house of Hapsburg, an arch-haughty archduchess of Austria, had thankfully accepted the hand of Lord Askham's "blackguard Corsican;" and Rome the classical,—Rome the Christian,—beheld her titular kingdom assigned to the heir of the new dynasty!—The extension of Napoleon's dominions had been accomplished amid the fear and trembling of nations, like the triumphal march of a pestilence.

As in all extreme cases whatever promises a change seems to promise amendment, much had been expected from the Regency;—the Whigs fondly flattering themselves that, so soon as the period of those restrictions expired which at present tied the hands if not the heart of the new potentate, they were sure of accession to power, which it was long since they had enjoyed for a sufficient space of time to secure the fruition of their policy.

"No, no!—hope nothing from the Prince!" said Lord Hardyng to his son, who was one of the most sanguine of the expectants.

"I know him better than you do. Though the best-natured of men, his habits of life have rendered him supine and selfish. A creature of habit, he will attempt no changes likely to throw trouble on his hands, or responsibility on his head. The Prince is a timid politician. The influence of the Queen, of the Duke of York, and of others soon to become equally ostensible, has obtained sufficient ascendancy over his nature to insure the triumph of the Tories."

To accredit his assertion, he playfully quoted the declaration of Aristophanes, that the dying words of graybeards are prophetic. For alas! he knew himself to be on the brink of the grave. The country was about to lose the benefit of his equitable heart, and lucid intellect. The hand of art had done its best to retard the evil day; but a terrible operation having been vainly effected, even Cline now shook his head.

The birth of two beautiful grandchildren to perpetuate the honours his exertions had created, rendered it hard to die,—even to so great a philosopher,—even to so good a Christian; and, bound to struggle against death at once for the sake of his family and of the nation, he was unwilling that his release should give pain to a circle so happy as that of Eske Hill, or deprive the country in its hour of adversity of a servant so zealously devoted.

More despondingly, still, however, were the affairs of Europe noted by the *détenu* at Verdun; and grievous was the perplexity experienced by Philip in the prolonged adjustment of his affairs, which his ever-recurring follies served constantly to re-embarrass. A costly *liaison* and large family of illegitimate children, aggravated the former evil results of the gaming-table: and there was now every year, an additional reason for deploring that he should ever have gone round by Toulouse.

To Philip, whom the routine of his life at Eden Castle was subduing into the utmost indolence of ease, it was a great annoyance to be forced to visit the metropolis, for consultations with Coutts and his lawyers, concerning the expedients to be adopted for the clearance of the Askham estates: and though his brother-in-law Lord Middlemore, (the fair Amazon of Mansfield Street being now the merry-hearted mistress of Hurstwood Castle, its groom-like lord, and princely estate!) assured him "it was a monstrous lucky thing for him to be forced out of his den now and then to rub off the rust,"—he could have well dispensed with the friction.

Great therefore was his vexation on receiving an intimation from his brother, on the death of Lord Hardyng, (the announcement of whose danger, insignificant as he had been formerly esteemed at Eden Castle, was of sufficient moment to be copied by the continental journals from the English papers,) of his desire that Philip should assume the representation of the family borough. The removal of the present member to the Upper House afforded

the long-desired opening; and the restrictions of the founder of the estate necessitating only a residence of six months in the year at Eden Castle, Lord Askham considered it his brother's duty to devote the remaining six to the interests of his family and the nation.

Such were the causes which, in the spring of 1811, compelled the recluse of Eden Castle to reinvolve himself in the vortex of London life;—at first, against his will;—for his mourning being only recently laid aside, he fancied that decorum required him to abstain from the pleasures that compensate such exertions.

But before he had been leading a single month the joyous life of the clubs and busy life of a member of parliament, the reiterated assurances of his friends convinced him that his existence was but now beginning;—and that his previous mischances in life were the result of a false start.

Had his despondency been ever so genuine, no one would have listened to “Askham's Night Thoughts!”—No one has leisure for grumblers. In the great hurricane of the world, people have enough to do to protect their own comfort and safety. A man is too busy in grappling himself for safety to a tree, or at least in holding on his hat, to have leisure for binding up imaginary wounds. Even misanthropy is less offensive than hypochondriacism: the misanthropist making no claim on public sympathy. For in this age of undisguised self-worship, no one chooses to bore himself with the boredom of the bored.

On finding there was no occasion for his chalice of tears, Philip took to champagne, as a beverage in which he could find friends to pledge him;—and on hearing that Lady Grandison pronounced him handsomer than ever, he even grew fastidious with his tailor and capricious with Hoby. Before the season was over, he had progressed into a popular dining-out man.

It was a pleasant time for popular diners-out. The closing of the continent compressed within the high-pressure boiler of London life, those varied powers which now go vapouring forth from Indus to the Pole; vivid spirits that float on the surface of Paris, Rome, Naples, Vienna,—skimming the Mediterranean in their yachts or steaming across the Atlantic or Red Sea.—Isolated within itself, English society was more original—more genuine—and consequently far more amusing. Tom Errand is a better fellow in his own clothes, than when bedizened in the jubilee suit of Beau Clincher; and we were as much better beasts in our bruteness of unsophisticated Bullism, than when simulating, with clumsy affectation, the adroit affectations of Paris, as there is more raciness in a rough old English farce in which the actors are well up in their parts, than in half-a-dozen ill-digested, ill-adjusted vaudevilles, “taken from the French.”

Even our absurdities, when indigenous, become us better than

those of exotic growth. The dandy set, which was soon blown and carried off on the wings of the wind, like a dandelion run to seed, was amusing enough when it first took out its patent of impertinence. At all events, it was diverting to watch the open-mouthed wonder with which *la cantonnade* surveyed the well-starched majesty of those who, by virtue of a better cut coat, felt privileged to snub the Regent!—The idiotism of the crowd that once collected to stare at the lion over Northumberland House, because some varlet asserted he had seen its tail wag, was bright by comparison with the besotment of those numskulls of quality, who invited the son of Lord North's butler into their houses only to insult them; and who, though a church-rate-paying and liturgy-rehearsing generation, were never weary of parroting the bonmots of another of the set, who, witty as the father of evil, was as little scrupulous in his parts of speech.

At Grandison House, Philip found the new power in full possession of the fortress.—The colours of dandyism, emblazoned with a tailor's goose proper on a field of tin, with a cap and bells for crest, were flying on the walls. No means of compromise with such an enemy. If of sufficient note to deserve its notice, you must become tributary, or antagonist;—and few were the men and none the women, who as yet found courage to accept the belligerent alternative.

The alliance of Philip, however, was eagerly courted by the dandies. He had glided at once into a definite place in London life.—For a man who at twenty-one is a member of White's, becomes at one-and-thirty a member of what he pleases;—nor had the golden opinions won during his earlier career, been frittered away into small change in a less prosperous position.—Having never appeared in London, humdrummed by the trammels of domestic life, he had a right to perch at once on one of the topmost rounds of the ladder of fashion.

The doors of Grandison House,—of the Lynchmores, Uppinghams, Norcliffes, and others of equally high account, were open to him as if his own; and when undisposed for the noisier pleasures of society, there was Eske Hill; where the new Lord and Lady Hardyng, though mourning in all sincerity the loss of one the best of fathers and ablest of men, were overjoyed to welcome him to their fireside.

But the impulse that threw him most irresistibly into society, originated in the House of Commons.—No man who devotes himself actively to a parliamentary career, can preserve a spirit of unsociability. A public school-boy might as well pretend to play the hermit!—If a heart-and-soul politician, party interests extend his sympathies into a thousand social ramifications: or if, as was the case with Philip, a lukewarm partizan, representing in parliament the dignity of the house of Askham rather than the interests of a district,

—he falls insensibly into the gossip and saunter of the House,—as half the Melton sportsmen prefer the covert-side to the run. Like them, Philip at present belonged to the coffee-room. But no matter to what we belong, so that it attach us by one or other of the filaments so essential to the organization of civilized life, to a considerable tribe of our fellow-creatures.

By two individuals in the metropolis, however, the new-comer was regarded as a stumbling-block. His brother Henry was not a little vexed to find an older and more important Askham than himself, facing him from the opposition benches, to discern that the speeches which read so plausibly among the country gentlemen had the effect of emptying the House of its choice spirits, so as often to render his oratory “*vox clamantis in deserto* ;” and [though maintaining towards Philip demonstrations of regard calculated to a hair’s-breadth by the conscientious civilities of the Marquis of Up-
pingham, he secretly wished that—

Edenbourne had fast bound him
With the Eden nine times round him,

safe in the halls of his ancestors.

The other malcontent was Helen Middlemore. With perseverance worthy a better cause, she still adhered to her designs on Lord Askham’s heir-presumptive; and, no longer reliant upon the charms of “a face whose red and white, Nature’s own sweet and cunning hand” might have “laid on,”—but had certainly laid on in the wrong place, she had made up her mind to disguise her faded cheeks and blooming nose under an impervious veil of domestic virtues. If no longer gifted to tempt him into making her a wife, she might tempt him into making her a mother-in-law!—

On finding, therefore, that Philip studied his own convenience by leaving Selina and her little charge in the country, under the care of the excellent governess and nurse so much better qualified than herself to watch over their well-being, she was inexpressibly mortified. The picturesque tenderness she had prepared herself to exhibit, and the knowledge she had crammed from her mother’s Underwood concerning the treatment of weakly children, were completely thrown away.

And since Philip was inaccessible through his nursery department, she had little hope of distancing the varied rivalships of the ball-room. For wherever he went, she saw his attentions an object of competition.—That he was one of the most distinguished-looking men of the day, was undeniable.—Lady Emilia de Lacy preferred conversing with him to dancing with the gayest of her partners; and the young Duchess of Norcliffe, who wanted nothing but animation to be a perfect beauty, was pronounced to acquire the one charm wanting, only when on the arm of Philip. Single and double, old and young, were unanimous in his favour. The world took

him on his seeming. The Mr. Askham of White's and Brookes's, was as little the Philip of Eden Castle, as the Henry of Boodle's; and the superannuated young lady began to perceive that, the children having failed as auxiliaries, she might as well draw off her forces, and sound a retreat.—

“What wild-goose chase had Helen in view, that she should bore us into coming here, only to chaperon her?”—whispered Lord Middlemore to his pretty bride, one night at Grandison House, where, thanks to a debate in the Lords on Catholic Emancipation, the party was unusually thin.

“Perhaps to see some person who is absent,” replied Susan, good-humouredly.—“Poor thing, it is a pity she should be disappointed!”

“A much greater pity that she should drag horses out of their comfortable stable, and people out of their comfortable home, only to help her in raking the moon out of the water!”—cried Middlemore, —(giving due precedence to the quadrupeds.) “Helen ought to see that it is time for her to take to Infant schools and Political economy.—She must try the goody line.—The trade of a ball-going beauty don't pay!”

To punish him for speaking so unkindly and coarsely of his sister, his young wife quietly inflicted a pinch on the arm on which she was leaning, which he had some difficulty in enduring with the composure of countenance indispensable to circles polite.—

“If not for the sake of your sister,” said she, regardless of his writhing, “you owe it to Lady Grandison to come here to-night, when so many of her friends are better engaged at the House.”

“Who cares to oblige a woman, by whom no living soul was ever obliged?”—persisted her husband, somewhat in awe of a second infliction.—

“I beg your pardon : she has often obliged *me*!” retorted Lady Middlemore. “The season before last, you would have spent evening after evening in Mansfield Street, entangling my silks and tossing over my work-box, had it not been for occasional visits to this house.—But surely the beautiful woman yonder on the ottoman, beside the Duchess of Sandbeck, to whom Sir Walter Lesly and Mr. Petrel are talking so earnestly, must be Lady Grandison's married daughter?”

“Lady Anastasia, by George!” cried Middlemore.—“What a time since she was in town!—At all events, nobody can say that De Bayhurst shuts her up in the country to ill-use her; for she is looking like an angel!”

“I never saw her before, except on her wedding-day, when she looked like a ghost,” observed Lady Middlemore.—“I had no idea she was so lovely.”

“Nor I,—nor any one else.—She is amazingly improved. She

has quite lost her insignificant missish look.—Who will dare to call her dear Stasy now?”

“I dare say no one ever *did*, — except yourself and her mother.”—

“Lord bless you,—there is no saying what Philip did not call her!—They were over head and ears in love with each other!”—

“Philip was never in love with any one but poor Evelyn!”—remonstrated Lady Middlemore. “The attention he may have shown Lady Anastasia de Bayhurst arose from her family connexion with the Savilles.”—

“If you were not my wife,” rejoined Middlemore good-humouredly,—“I would take the trouble of setting you right. But it is enough for one of the family to be better informed.—Come and be introduced to Lady Anastasia.”—

“In her mother’s house, I would rather wait till she asks for the introduction.”

Unrestrained however by delicacies of any kind, Lord Middlemore was not in the habit of waiting; and as, next to making his old flame, Lady Anastasia, acquainted with his wife, he wanted to know what had at last brought her to town, he did not scruple to interrupt her conversation with the Duchess of Sandbeck, expressly to inquire.—

“Do you know we were half afraid we should never see the inside of that famous house of yours in Grosvenor Square!” said he. “Now that the windows have been shuttered up a couple of seasons, people are beginning to call it Paradise Lost. I had almost a mind to write to Sir Hugh de Bayhurst, when I was looking out for a house at my marriage, and ask him if he was inclined to let or sell.”

“I trust Lady Middlemore found a house equally to her satisfaction in some other quarter?”—replied Lady Anastasia courteously, but evading with a deep blush the question of her own absence from town.

“Why, yes,—we took Helmingfield’s, which was a much better thing for us;—treble coach-house, and ten-stall stable,—everything we could want!” replied Lord Middlemore, who, as his wife liked all that *he* liked, thought himself privileged to answer for her.—“But how is it that De Bayhurst keeps you so confoundedly mewed up in the country?—I shall call him over the coals for it the first time we meet.”

“If you wish to quarrel with either of us on the subject, let it be *me*,” said Lady Anastasia,—unwilling to hazard the tomahawking which a man like Middlemore was likely to inflict upon her husband. “It is all *my* doing. I am grown quite a Lady Bountiful; and we are passing through town only to take our boy to Eton.”

“*Your* boy?” interrupted Lord Middlemore, with a crowing laugh.—“Come, that’s too much of a good thing!—Remember we

were all single in this room, three years ago!—Ay, to be sure!”—cried he, with sudden recollection, “I remember, now hearing that you’d cleared Philip Askham’s hands of his wife’s son. And so the youngster is going to Eton already, is he!—Quite right.—I hope *I* shall have nothing but girls,—(not choosing to have the reins taken out of my hands so long as I am able to drive!) But if I do, by George, they shall all go to Eton as soon as they’re breeched!—Eton is the only place where a fellow learns anything worth speaking of!—All the time I was in the upper school, I used to allow Bill Harris a guinea a week, to let me drive the Datchet coach on half-holidays. And I never was worth my salt, till I had it pitched into me by Horace Trevor, in a stand-up fight in the playing-fields, which, by-the-way, was the first thing that determined me to put myself into training. And only ask Cribb what he thinks of me *now*!”—

During this neat and appropriate address, the Duchess of Sandbeck sat contemplating her niece with inexpressible admiration. As Anastasia Grandison, she would have noted with a childish giggle Lord Middlemore’s self-exposure. But now, after listening with patient serenity, she hastened to cover the embarrassment likely to be experienced by his wife, by well-bred inquiries after Lord and Lady Hardynges.—“She had heard with regret of their loss.—She knew the grief it would occasion them.—Her nearest and kindest country neighbours, the Scotneys, were nearly related to the dowager Lady Hardynges, and from *them* she had heard with great interest of the affliction of the family at Eske Hill.”

The Duchess, a woman of the *vieille roche*, who appreciated good breeding as first among the minor morals of society, was puzzled to know how the young girl who, in the highest circles of the court had never got rid of the flippant levity of a spoiled child, should have acquired in the seclusion of a country life her present feminine composure. Nor was Petrel, who had been confiding to Sir Walter Lesly his admiration of the altered tone of her conversation, less completely amazed.

“I never suspected a Roger Ascham in De Bayhurst,” said he,—“yet he seems to be the most efficient of tutors!—We are apt to fancy a planet brighter after an eclipse. But this Sussex star has progressed from the fifth to the first magnitude.”

The verdict of Petrel, whether on the death of a gnat or the crumbling of a dynasty, was sure to obtain circulation; and the moment his opinion transpired that the former belle of Grandison House was converted into a *bel esprit*, people prepared themselves to be enchanted by every syllable that fell from her lips. She was soon followed to be listened to, as formerly to be looked at.

But if the decree of Petrel secured admiration, the manner in which she was treated by the austere Duchess of Sandbeck, insured respect. The place now conceded to her, was totally different from the one she had formerly occupied. Not the smallest analogy be-

tween the fantastical sylph or Sir Thomas Lawrence, and the beautiful young woman who received with such unassuming dignity the compliments of her mother's guests.

The only person insensible to the change, was Lady Grandison.—Even the Earl, so unobservant of anything that occurred without the pale of the stable yard, had patted Anastasia on the back, almost as approvingly as if the blood and beauty she displayed could be placed in competition with that of his high-mettled racers, and turned to account in his book. But her mother was so blinded, deafened, and besotted by the narcotic poison of politics, that there was not so much as an open pore where natural affection could creep in!

“The Regent,”—“the regency,”—“the restrictions,”—had entire possession of her giddy brain and worldly heart.

Though the abler heads of the Whig party were now convinced that the attainment of perfect freedom of action would not suffice to detach his Royal Highness from the administration with which circumstances had forced him into alliance, and which was connected by so many links with the victorious general in whose charge the British banner had become triumphant in the Peninsula, this flimsy Cleopatra of May Fair relied so foolhardily on her own powers, as to fancy that her intimacy with the Duke of York, whose Toryism was, if not as hard as iron, as tough as leather, would prevail over *him*; and *through* him, over one who was as fast bound as the best of cooks and cuisines could bind him, in the chains of Hertford House!

Such was her object;—such was her day-dream;—and involved in these stilted ambitions, it was beneath her dignity to inquire whether dear Stasy had neglected her former canary-bird pursuits of fancy-work and warbling, for graver and holier studies.—On finding the Scotneys of Holmehurst mentioned in her daughter's letters, (soon after Mrs. Askham's death,) as valuable neighbours, she observed in reply, that “Lady Anastasia was quite right to *notice* them; for it was always proper to keep up in a country neighbourhood the respectability of the clergy.” It did not occur to her that the obligations, in such a friendship, *could* be on the side of Bayhurst Hall!—

“A charming note from the Prince Regent, my dear,” said she, in an audible whisper, placing a letter in her daughter's hand ere her conversation with the Middlemores was at an end. “Impossible to come here to-night; but he intreats that you will repair his loss by accompanying me to-morrow to the fête at Carlton House. You are in favour, I can assure you.—Two thousand invitations already out!—Lord Rigmarole, though a lord of the treasury, dared not ask for one for his wife.”

“Nihil tam firmum est, cui periculum non sit etiam ab invalido!” muttered Petrel aside to Sir Walter Lesly. “Lord Rigmarole is a

great example; but the Regent is a greater prince. Had I a wife so pretty as Lady Anastasia de Bayhurst, I would not seek invitations for her to Carlton House!"—

CHAPTER XXIV.

Je retrouvais là cette fatalité de l'ordre social, qui me poursuivait partout.

DUCHESSE DE DURAS.

So long as I was possessed by the evil spirit of worldliness, vile as I was, I persisted in maintaining the semblance of decency and honour.

CONFESSIONS OF ST. AUGUSTIN.

Dieser Setze ihm goldene Datteln, goldene Feigen, goldene Fischen, und goldenes Brod vor.

« Effet ihr das Gold hier? fragte Alexander. »

MENDELSONN.

The first word that greeted the ear of Philip on the morrow at his club, was the name of Anastasia!—Wellington, Massena, Beresford, Badajoz, and the Guadiana,—Grey, Grenville, Whitbread, Grattan, Duigenan, and the Catholic Question,—words of moment, which had constituted the murmur of its surges the preceding day, were now overpowered by that of De Bayhurst! Some spoke of the husband,—some of the wife;—the married men deciding that Sir Hugh was quite justified in securing so rich a treasure in the country;—the single, that the place for such treasures, is in town!

It was the midsummer meridian of the year, when the lilies of the field and the follies of London are in their brightest bloom, so as to render either attractive.—At such a moment, the world of fashion acquires from its activity of movement, a sort of consistency; as froth may be rendered solid by sufficient whipping. That auspicious 20th of June was a day singled out of a thousand, and marked with diamond cross, as one of triumph to the levity-lovers; for, on the plea that the suppression of the Birthdays must be fatal to the interests of trade, the patriotic Prince had issued invitations for an entertainment, more magnificent than any given in Europe since the gorgeous fêtes of Versailles, whose golden waste proved the means of sapping the foundations of the ancient monarchy of France.

Announced by government papers and loyal partizans as a generous concession to the interests of the counter, the Regent's fête was in fact a popularity-trap for all sorts and conditions of men;—a coalition-bait,—an anodyne for the *frondeurs* of Brookes's and a stimulant to the painstaking Tories, who were already exalting upon their shoulders the Prince whom they had so often denounced as a son of perdition. With tears in his eyes, Lord Eldon was prepared

to certify of the fourth George as of the fifth Harry, that though, in his green and sallad days,

— his addiction was to courses vain,—
His companies unlawful, rude, and shallow,—
His hours filled up with riots, banquets, sports,—

consideration had

— like an angel come,
And whipped the offending Adam out of him,
Leaving his body as a paradise
To envelop and contain celestial spirits;—

which celestial spirits, Horace Trevor loudly protested to be Garus and Curaçoa!—At all events, the “riots, banquets, sports,” had taken the form of right-royal hospitality; and the Montespan of the new reign, to whom half a century’s experience of men and things might be supposed to impart some tact of judgment, announced that a full-fledged, or rather full-wigged phoenix was arising from the long-mouldering ashes of Louis XIV.!

Tory tenets, meanwhile, were decidedly in the ascendant.—For a prince who celebrated his accession to power, based on the severest family calamity that visits mortal nature, by the sound of sackbut, lute, harp, and psaltery, and mirth and feasting, could not fail to attach himself to the party that advocated not only a standing army, but standing war,—and eternal (pscha!—we would say) *capital* punishments; under whose auspices, gunpowder and hemp were looking up, and Lord Ellenborough, Newgate, and Surgeons’ Hall rubbing their hands. But then, the church was secure!—Tithes were *also* looking up; and the disappointed Catholics driven back weeping into their oratories, to pray for a more tolerant dispensation.

It is true that the dragon’s teeth sown by Cadmus, were striking their iron roots into the earth, to produce armed men at no remote epoch. But their germination was at present concealed under the enamelled surface of a society, whose golden gloss reflected like a mirror, the glowing beams of the rising sun. At the gates of Carlton House, the guard of honour of the dandies was drawn out in their new uniforms, embroidered on every seam; and even the *bitter* half of St. James’s Street,—the independents of Whites,—swore once more (like Lord Middlemore) “by GEORGE!”—The initials of G. P. R., which, though shortly destined to shine forth in all the coloured fires and glittering sparks of the pyrotechnists, were still unfamiliar to the public eye, became the ambition of every well-bred button,—and even of the souls that should have been above them.

The fashionable world, *en attendant*, had taken it into its empty head that mighty auguries were to be deduced from the aspect of the inaugurative fête, and Philip Askham, like the rest, prepared himself to draw the horoscope of the country from the conjunction of planets now in the ascendant at Carlton House.

But, alas! like the astrologer in the fable, while speculating on the stars so high above his head, he ran great risk of tumbling into a well! The first object that greeted his eyes at the fête was *her* whose name had been the first word to greet his ears that morning.—Lady Anastasia, in the full effulgence of her beauty,—radiant with diamonds,—beaming with smiles,—fair as daylight,—sweet as summer,—entered the ball-room, leaning on the arm of her dark-haired, dark-eyed mother,

Led by her dusky guide like Morning led by Night.

Since his marriage, or her own, no communication had taken place between them.—Nearly four years had elapsed, since they heard the sound of each other's voices, (though memory still preserved the echo in their hearts!)—four years,—which had converted the pretty, flirting girl, into a thinking, feeling woman,—perfecting at once the expansion of her mind and development of her luxuriant beauty.

By general acclamation, Lady Anastasia was pronounced the loveliest of the lovely, at that memorable fête!—But if thus distinguished by persons who admired only her sweetness of countenance, her grace of gesture, her well-rounded symmetry of form, what was she to *him* with whom she was associated by so many personal reminiscences,—so many fond regrets? Little as Philip Askham suspected the blight he had inflicted on her innocent youth, he knew that she had loved him,—loved him, hopelessly and unencouraged;—and never had the sense of his selfish ingratitude so startled his conscience—no, not even beside the coffin of his lost Evelyn,—as while fixing his wistful gaze on that beautiful woman,—an object of adoration to the assembled dignitaries of the land!

Approach her, he dared not.—He mistrusted his own feelings, and he mistrusted *hers*;—mistrusted them, however, on no very positive grounds; for *one* moment, he fancied that reminiscences of other times would bring tears into those radiant eyes, so as to commit them both; and the next, dreaded lest resentment should arm her queenly brow with indignation, and reduce him in the eyes of others into the pitiful creature he already was in her own.

“What a deuce of a crowd?”—said Lord Middlemore, abruptly terminating his meditations, as he advanced through the brilliant vestibule into the statue-gallery terminating the state apartments.—“Two thousand invitations issued, and no excuses; except the Hardynges (who did not choose to appear as a couple of black swans,) and Lord Holland, who is said to have written word that he was engaged to St. Anne's Hill.”

A whisper from his wife, begging him to moderate his voice and increase his discretion, induced him to propose transferring her to the hands of her brother.

“I wish to mercy, Phil, you'd take care of Susy for ten minutes

or so!" cried he.—"She has turned restive, at the sight of the crowd; and I'm wild to get a sight of the Gothic conservatory and illuminated arches leading to the temporary rooms, which they say are dazzling. The French princes have been calling for smelling salts,—the whole thing reminded them so confoundedly of Versailles!"

"Like the spectre in the Walpurgis Nacht," said Philip, addressing his sister, "the fête seems to exhibit to every one the object of his love; for the Russian ambassador assured me just now that he fancied himself at Ispahan! These magnificent tropical plants, borrowed from the royal gardens at Kew, certainly support the illusion; and near the conservatory, there is a vista of towering palm trees with the interstices filled up with masses of roses, which is really enchanting!—Byron's friend Hafiz, will certainly favour us with an ode to-morrow, in the Morning Post."

"Won't *that* account tempt you, Susy?"—said Lord Middlemore to his wife,—who was now on her brother's arm. But she had already conditioned with Philip to conduct her to the ball-room; where, being in a situation to require rest, she proposed to fix herself with Lady Uppingham, under whose chaperonage their younger sister, Sophia, was making her *début*.

Willingly, however, would Philip have persuaded her to content herself where she was. The Uppinghams were now so paramount in royal favour and so high in ministerial dignity, that it was scarcely possible to join them without intruding into a privileged sphere; and his tenacious pride was on its guard against the charge of aspiring to share their Tory honours, or poaching on the manor of his brother Henry, of which the young member was a strict preserver.

Having progressed, however, into a "*distinguished* member," Henry Askham had little to fear from competition!—He had now only to name the decimal to his cipher.—He was no longer adjective, but substantive. The transition of dear Stasy into a highbred woman, was not half so marvellous among the miracles of time, as the solidification of the superficial aspirant into a steady official man; sure-footed as a mill-horse, strengthened in fibre by saturation in the brine of Treasury pickle, and as surely grooved into the slide of preferment, as one-sided politics and many-sided servility could make him!

In spite of Philip's reluctance, Lady Middlemore was soon seated with her sisters in the ball-room, as near as might be to the focus of Majesty; and thus shone upon by its lustre, the brilliant little group amply accredited the proverbial beauty of the family.

"You may certainly boast of having the handsomest sisters in London. I regret that one of them should be absent!" was the flattering compliment of the Regent to his old acquaintance, on Lady Middlemore's entrance; a decree that intantaneously effaced

from fashionable memory the impertinence of Horace Trevor, who had previously nicknamed the four sisters, "Askham's Cardinal Virtues."

On perceiving from a distance how graciously Philip was addressed by their royal host, Lady Lynchmore, as he was quitting the ball-room, contrived to fasten Lady Emilia on his arm; a sad reminder that he had arrived at a time of life when a man unguarded by the insurance-plate of an avowed *liaison* nailed on his bosom, must hold himself at the disposal of those who have no privileged *patito* of their own.

To resent being appropriated to so pretty and pleasant a companion as Lady Emilia, however, was out of the question; and though annoyed at being selected to take charge of her only as a *safe man*—a flyflap to keep off the noisome swarm of guardsmen and younger brothers, with whom it was sentence of death for her to dance,—he accomplished her mother's object of causing her to be seen, and her own, of seeing the varied and brilliant details of that feast of roses;—the overarching bowers of exotics, gleaming with subdued light, while sparkling devices of coloured lamps glittered as in mockery beyond;—corridors festooned with flowers, exhaling ineffable fragrance;—a wilderness of gorgeous uniforms, radiant with the badges of chivalry;—diamonds, as if gathered in masses from the valley of Sinbad;—fair faces, assembled as by an enchanter's wand; while strains of choicest music, each answering each from saloon to hall, completed the magic of the scene.

In the midst of these enchantments, he was accidentally forced into collision with Lady Anastasia! A sudden summons to supper having impelled the brilliant throng streaming along the crowded walks of the garden, into the marquees set forth for the banquet, and Lady Grandison having, as usual, manœuvred herself into a place at the table reserved for the royal family, foreign princes, ambassadors, and cabinet ministers, her daughter, on the arm of the Duke of Norcliffe, was conducted into the very tent whither Philip was leading Lady Emilia!—Unprivileged to share the honours of the royal table, with its glitter of gold plate, great men, and little fishes, De Bayhurst's wife had the ill-fortune not only to be placed beside the only man present she desired to avoid, but under circumstances to render her thankful for his protection in the crowd.

With better judgment than might have been expected from his perturbation, Philip offered *only* his protection. So little, indeed, did he intrude on her notice, that it was solely from the answers he heard her address during supper to the Duke of Norcliffe, that he ascertained her to be alone in town. When his Grace, with solemn pleasantry, accused Sir Hugh of timing his visit to Eton so as to avoid the *corvée* of comparison between the uniform of his Yeo-

manry corps and that of the Tenth, his fair companion was not at the trouble of denial.

The halting gallantries of the scientific Duke were, however, fully compensated by the devoted attentions of Horace Trevor, who had possessed himself of the vacant place on the other side; and Philip had not only the annoyance, throughout supper, of inferring from the blushes of Lady Anastasia the extreme directness of his compliments, but of finding exposed to *her* observation the affectionate familiarities of Lady Emilia; who, regarding him only as the father of her dear Lina, treated him almost as unceremoniously as she would have done her own. Aware that rumour had long coupled their names in his own county, he could easily interpret the smile with which their intimacy was pointed out by Trevor to the attention of his companion.

And thus, the pleasure of commanding a view of the most beautiful object in the room, was completely invalidated for Philip; and it was positive relief when the finest banquet at that time ever given in England, wore to an end. So thoroughly, indeed, was he discountenanced by the untoward circumstances attending his encounter with Lady Anastasia, that, after recommitting his young friend to her chaperon, he determined to have his carriage called for immediate departure.

But in a crowd such as that which surrounded him, *who* may pretend to be his own master! As he crossed the statue-gallery, the royal tent was pouring forth its distinguished guests; entangled among whom, Askham suddenly found his button in the hand of the Duke of Sandbeck,—a bore of such surpassing magnitude, that his device ought to have been an ivy plant,—not with its usual motto of “*Je meurs où je m’attache*,” but “*Où je m’attache je fais mourir*.”

Thanks to his Garter and seat in the cabinet, however, the most ponderous of peers had been sharing with his sister, Lady Grandison, the honours of a spot where everything pretended to be light, from the trifles on the table, to the characters of the triflers surrounding it; and, having nothing to say about the gold fishes and donkey-and-pannier saltcellars, but what had been said by his neighbours, his Grace rendered *his* version original by the air of profound mystery with which he whispered it into the inmost ear of his companion, as though a high treason secret of the P. C.! The standers-by had, accordingly, reason to surmise that some heinous breach of etiquette or unpleasant disaster had marred the harmony of the royal supper table;—that the little fishes, like those in the Arabian tales, had taken to talking;—or the great men, (an omen equally portentous,) to being silent!

By the time Askham was able to extricate the cut-steel button, (which his valet pointed out next morning as fatally rusted by the contact,) his deference towards a brother of Lady Grandison’s

and an uncle of Lady Grandison's daughter had led him insensibly round into the ball-room; where, among his sisters, as if one of the family group, sat Lady Anastasia, towards whom the Duke of Sandbeck instantly directed the steps of both. Philip had, however, nothing to regret in the movement. The graciousness with which he was welcomed, reconciled him to her and to himself.

Lady Anastasia appeared to have forgotten that she had anything to resent!—In the course of the last two years, her mind and feelings having acquired the serenity derived from a well-spent life, she had learned to regard Mr. Askham only with the compassion due to the survivor of one of the most amiable of women.—From the Scotneys, she had gleaned enough concerning Evelyn's early sorrows and exemplary conduct, to know how thoroughly she deserved to be lamented.

Of her own destiny, the evils were irretrievable! But, like a wise man shipwrecked on a desolate shore, she had set about remedying the miseries of her condition, and saving all she could from the wreck. Though an object of aversion to her husband, though no longer even desirous to obtain his affections, she was determined to command his respect. If even that were unattainable, it was something to enjoy her own.

Unsuspected by herself, however, Lady Anastasia had conquered a larger space than his proud ferocity of nature permitted him to avow, in the regard of Sir Hugh de Bayhurst. To remove the stony barrier he had wantonly created between them, was now impossible. But while following up the line of conduct he had traced for himself, by surrounding her with the privileges and public deference so much her due, without exceeding the bounds of courteous but cold companionship established between them, he was deeply touched by the resignation with which she submitted to his tyrannical injustice. As if warned by her short London experience of the dangers to which she might be exposed by indulgence in vanities innocuous to happier women, she had at once and for ever cheerfully adopted the habits of a country life.

But the point on which she obtained the strongest influence over his feelings, was by her conduct towards the boy to whom he had rapidly attached himself with all the force of feelings elsewhere repulsed. Never was father fonder than he of Edward Saville;—or rather of Edward de Bayhurst,—for he had obtained an extension of his privilege in favour of his heir. And so far from entertaining the smallest jealousy of this predilection, Anastasia, the embarrassment of whose position was considerably relieved by the interposition of any third person in her *ménage*, was almost as partial, and quite as indulgent, as himself. From the moment of Edward's arrival, indeed, the dreariness of Bayhurst had ceased. Youth and pastime came together; and the gates once thrown open to the neighbourhood, she had no difficulty in distinguishing the merit

of the Scotneys of Holmehurst, and the advantage she might derive from their society.

Endowed with the highest qualities of head and heart, enjoying an honourable position in the county, and commanding, even from her husband, a degree of deference he was little in the habit of according, no obstacle could be opposed to the intimacy. Sir Hugh was grateful for the discretion which had governed their knowledge of his early conduct;—a knowledge, however, which enabled them in some degree to interpret the depression of his young and lovely bride, and disposed them to receive halfway her overtures of friendship.

Thanks to the invaluable lessons acquired at Holmehurst, she now beheld in Philip Askham only the widower of Evelyn and brother of the agreeable and distinguished women among whom she was placed; and her pleasantest moments at the royal fête, were derived from the conversation of that cheerful family group;—conversation that Henry Askham would have coughed down as frivolous and vexatious, and Horace Trevor denounced as the hum of a hive of drones.

While Lady Grandison was fidgeting about the ball-room, putting forth the innumerable feelers that surround the person of an *intrigante*, which were now in perpetual motion in the hope of securing by the junction of her political and personal *liaisons* the Garter for her lord, (who cared about as much for it as for a surcingle!)—Lady Anastasia was completing, by her charms of manner and conversation, the conquest her beauty had begun.

That night, the unquiet pillow of Philip was haunted neither by the dazzling splendour of the Regent's fête, nor the inferences to be deduced from it, touching the new court,—in which far-sighted persons foresaw the magnificence and ill example of that of Versailles. The face of Anastasia shone through his closed eyelids. The perplexing question of whether Lord Hardyng were deceived in supposing that attractive woman to have cherished towards him feelings of affection, distracted his mind! Fortunately for *him*.—perhaps for both,—on the morrow Lady Anastasia was to resume the peaceful pursuits and self-created duties of her happy seclusion; while *he* pursued in London the noisy tenour of his way as a chatty member of society, and silent member of parliament.

When he returned at the close of the session to Eden Castle, Selina, who felt almost as much embarrassed at the prospect of his arrival as her poor mother when she had to account for the appearance of an uninvited Shetland pony in the park, was struck by the strange preoccupation of his manner.

He was not the same person who had quitted Edenbourne a few months before; and if no longer the savage whose interdictions had provoked rebellion on the part of her brother, he took so little heed of the improvement of little Percy of which *she* was so proud, that,

for the first time since her mother's death, that terrible denunciation recurred to her mind :—

“The poor child will be an object of affection to no one,—not even to his father !”

Silent,—absent,—disregardful,—she had great difficulty in finding an opening for the communication she felt it her duty to make that, during his absence, she had received the gift of a costly watch and chain from Sir Erasmus L'Estrange ; who, for two years past, had been living at the lodge the life of an anchorite.

Though his sister and nieces proposed every summer to become his inmates, he made his health a plea for excluding his family from his presence ; and, with the exception of weekly visits to the church thrice-consecrated in his eyes as the resting-place of Evelyn, and daily ones to a beautiful private chapel he had caused to be erected in his grounds, the unhappy old man never left his chamber. Even when, profiting by Mr. Askham's departure, he despatched to his little favourite the rich present conveying the assurance of his continued affection, he did not evince a desire to see her.—Perhaps because he thought it might incense her privileged protector ;—perhaps lest his decrepitude should provoke in the fastidious eyes of girlhood, the disgusts which had rendered him insupportable to her mother.

But to Selina's great surprise, when the terrible secret was disclosed, (with almost as much tremour and irresolution as had accompanied the announcement of poor Elshie,) Mr. Askham listened with the same indifference as to the Primer-proficiency of his sickly boy ! She saw that she might have accepted a diamond necklace from Sir Erasmus without exciting his anger !—

But though as much pleased as surprised at being permitted to retain her treasure, she could not but dwell anxiously on the change manifest in her stepfather. Did it arise from the anxious influence of parliament,—a mystery rendered lawful in the eyes of the school-room, by terror-striking reminiscences of the reigns of the Stuarts ?—

No ! the merry laugh of Hardyng assured her that the representation of Edenbourne was not so *very* stern a duty ; and there was no accounting for the restlessness which caused him to spend hour after hour in rambling over hill and dale through the domain, with dog and gun for pretext, but no keeper in attendance to attest the reality of his sportsmanship ; or when the winter came, to devote four days of the week to the hounds, however remote the meet, or unpropitious the weather.

It was a dreary winter for Selina ! The Regency-crisis having re-engendered great acrimony of party feeling, Askham declined the annual visit to Uppingham Manor which the kindly nature of the Marchioness (in whom she fancied she could trace a resemblance to her gentle mother,) always rendered so delightful. Nor

had she even the resource of Hexham. With somewhat more than the lip-patriotism of his father, Lord Delvyn had exerted his influence with his parents in favour of his native country; and Lynchmore Castle was once more the seat of hospitality, and Hexham Hall of desolation.

Never, therefore, had Selina longed so earnestly for the return of spring;—for never before had she known the dreariness of winter. Her little charge was a sufferer during the winter months; and in her troubles, she missed the companionship of the De Lacys, and their brother. The revival of the fields and flowers, to cheer her daily walks, would be at least some compensation!

But was it a similar impulse that instigated the eagerness with which Philip Askham, also, watched the progress of the kalendar?—Was he too longing for the first violet?—Alas! the letters of Edward to his sister had apprized him that the De Bayhursts intended to pass the season in town; where the society of the object who engrossed every thought of his mind, would become once more attainable!—Though never to be *his*, he might at least feast his eyes upon her face,—his ears upon her voice,—his soul upon the hope of exciting a warmer interest in her own!

With the view of effecting a more intimate communication between the families by means of the little Savilles, he resolved to remove his establishment to town; and the pretext assigned, of wishing to obtain masters for Selina, achieved of course for the considerate benefactor the reputation of being “the best of step-fathers.” The shrewd axiom of La Rochefoucault, that “*nous faisons quelquefois le bien, pour pouvoir faire impunément le mal,*” had not opened the honest eyes of Edenbourne!

Eagerly as the little girl looked forward to the return of spring for the renewal of her country pleasures, she was far more delighted to visit that unknown great city, so much vaunted by the De Lacys, and so much nearer to Eton, which was to place her within reach of the kind sisters of “papa.”—

The house in Brook Street adjoining that of the Dowager Lady Middlemore, (which Askham had engaged, as if in deference to his cousin Helen’s suggestion of the advantage to his little boy of vicinity to the park, but in reality from its proximity to Grosvenor Square,) was soon cheered by visits from every member of the Askham family;—who rejoiced the heart of the faithful Susan by exclamations of delight at the improvement of her nursling, and the beauty of Selina.

Though little more than thirteen, an instinctive grace of deportment already assigned to her tall slender figure almost the charm of womanhood; and Lady Lynchmore, who had long interdicted her merry lord from including Miss Saville in the practical jokes with which he was in the habit of “frighting from its propriety” his daughters’ school-room, expressed an opinion to her son that

Lina was growing too old to be tormented, like one of his sisters, under the specious name of his "little wife."

But when thus established as a family man, the hospitalities extended to a houseless hanger-on of the clubs, had of course to be returned by the Honourable Philip Askham, M.P., in the enjoyment of five thousand a-year and just such a house in Brook Street as insures the expenditure of ten. Lesly and Trevor were at the trouble of supplying him with an excellent cook.—With every intention of dining with him whenever they had no better engagement, it behoved them to provide for the interests of their digestion; and, after his first dinner party his establishment was quoted, even by Lord Sefton, as so superexcellent, that Helen Middlemore acquired rivals enough in her pretensions to his hand, to add another plait to her crow's-feet!—

For Askham's settlement in town was of course connected by the world, with matrimonial intentions.—He was just in the position, and at the age, to marry again. Handsome, popular, enjoying a good income, good name, and good connexions, he had no right to remain a widower; and Lady Emilia de Lacy was not the only one of the beauties of the day named as likely to preside over his new residence.—

"Ware hawk, Phil, my boy!" cried Lord Middlemore, pointing to an angle of his mother's balcony, which commanded a view of his drawing-room; "for, as Helen will be sure to play Romeo to your Juliet the first moonlight night, I have put my friend the watchman on his guard. The Charleys, hereabouts, know me of old! When I lived with my mother, I used to make them spring their rattles for as many fires as, if real, would have made bankrupts of every insurance office in town!"—

By another brother-in-law, meanwhile, he was warned against dangers of a very different nature.—Lord Hardyng, profoundly discouraged by the realization of his father's prophecies concerning the Regent's desertion of his party on the cessation of the restrictions, regarded the overtures for a coalition, rebutted with so much dignity by Lords Grey and Grenville, as an insult greater than injury. But he was not so sure of the steadiness of his successor in the representation of Edenbourne. He feared that Philip had embraced the cause of liberalism with the levity due to a mistress, not with the sacred affection due to a wife.—

Though reconciled to the loss of power and influence, which, in common with men wiser and more experienced than himself, he had fancied secured to the Whigs by the accession of the Prince whom in his adversity they had so warmly supported,—though comforted in his place on the opposition benches, like Galileo in his prison, by the certainty that, let his own position be what it might, the world was revolving—the good cause in progress,—(*e pur si muove!*) he could not but apprehend that Askham was

likely to be picked up by the sails of the windmill at Grandison House, and carried round in his own despite.—

The foolish woman who, amid the wars of Europe and the tumults of the manufacturing districts,

ubique
Luctus, ubique pavor,—

heard nothing but her own *jabotage*, and saw only the perspective of a blue riband, was beginning to parley with the enemy; and he knew that, “*Château qui parle ou femme qui écoute, va se rendre.*”—Her carriage was seen many times in the week, within the gates of Hertford House; and those best skilled to interpret the course of the wind by straws thrown up as a test, announced that her jargon about “Lord Grandison’s long-standing friendship with the dear Duke of York,” (in honour of its turf origin, she might have called it a long *running* one!) and her “personal regard for the dear Prince Regent, which rendered it impossible for her to receive in her house those by whom their Royal Highnesses had been insulted,”—foretold decided ratification.

“For the love of decency, my dear Askham,” cried Lord Hardyng, as soon as he noticed the assiduity of his brother-in-law at Grandison House,—“don’t let that harpy *à l’eau de rose* get hold of you! If she failed in humbugging you into a son-in-law, don’t let her convert you into a catspaw!—All she wants is a link with Lord Uppingham and Henry. Or perhaps, by ascertaining how many pieces of silver reward your defection, she may hope to learn what is bid for Lord Grandison’s.—Poor apostate!—She will hang herself in that garter, after all!”

“There is nothing to fear on my account,” replied Philip, coldly. “One accepts Lady Grandison as of a certain value in her own set, as in Africa the cowries that constitute its currency!”

“Which one flings into the sea, on attaining a civilized latitude!—She reminds *me* rather of the Automaton conjuror; the mechanism that governs which excites more curiosity than the tricks it performs. I can’t help wondering what the deuce the Tories mean to do with her.”

“Exactly what *we* are doing, probably; abuse her behind her back, after accepting her hospitalities.”—

“*That* is done by each, to all. I mean what specific purpose they mean her to accomplish. Lord Uppingham, for instance, is a man who carefully weighs his actions as he does his words, (and heavy enough he ought to find them!) And you must have noticed that for some time past, Lady Uppingham never misses a party at Grandison House.”

“Because she finds them pleasanter now Lady Anastasia has returned to town. Nay, every one being of her opinion; they are now so much the best things going, that it would be unfair to

Sophy, whom Margaret usually chaperons, to deprive her of the advantage."

"I am answered,—but not satisfied!" replied Hardyng; who felt convinced that some latent motive existed, though of what nature he knew not.

And so there did!

The Marchioness of Uppingham, with her quiet habits of observation, had noticed with regret the deep devotion of her brother to Lady Anastasia. She was unwilling to hazard a remark on the subject, even to her husband, lest report should be the means of substantiating the evil. But aware that, on every Wednesday night at Grandison House, Philip enjoyed an opportunity from which his parliamentary duties debarred him on other occasions, of spending the evening by the side of his lovely friend, and, fully appreciating the influence in society of her own blameless conduct and Lord Uppingham's influential position, she resolved, by joining them, to impose a restraint on their intimacy as well as on the malicious observations of the world.

Satisfied that Lady Anastasia's conduct and intentions were pure as her own, she fancied, as it became a woman so passionless to fancy, that the mere restrictions of social form would prevent the attachment of Philip from becoming manifest to its object; and that, thus repressed, his prepossession would eventually pass away like other vapourish emanations from the heart or brain of a man of fashion.

Such was her praiseworthy reason for frequenting Grandison House. Such her motive for provoking the secret execrations of her brother by the tenacity with which she adhered to the enchanting woman, to whose side all were anxious to adhere. The Marquis made no objection to her visits to the camp of the Philistines. Esteeming both himself and his party immeasurably above the reach of injury from the trifling associations of the *beau monde*, he held his white head as high as Mont Blanc.

"It is a great mistake, my dear Henry," said he, when remonstrated with by his pragmatical protégé,—“to maintain too pertinaciously that party antagonism which tends to render coalition difficult, and conversion impossible. It is a distinctive sign of the tyrant, to be always cuirassed and under arms. Let our wives and daughters, at least, enjoy exemption from the exacerbations of party strife.”

“But if at Grandison House, my sisters should form connexions with those who are perpetually harassing, thwarting, and insulting us?” observed Henry, whose ears were excoriated by the ironical cheers and sarcastic diatribes of the opposition benches.

“You do them too much honour by allowing their pin's pricks to disconcert you!” replied Lord Uppingham. “You should regard them with the imperturbability maintained by some lofty statue in

a city highway, while applewomen are squabbling and curs yelping round its pedestal."

From which mode of rejecting his protest, Henry Askham inferred not only that the proxy of Lord Grandison was already at the disposal of ministers; but that his noble patron knew his party to be seated in power by its recent re-establishment, beyond all danger of change or opposition.

CHAPTER XXV.

Das Drafel.

In seinem Innern, das Lebendige, —
Nicht todtte Bücher, alte Ordnungen,
Nicht modrigte Papiere, soll er fragen! —

SCHILLER.

To be a dog, a mule, a cat, a fitchew, a toad, a lizard, an owl, a puttock, I would not care!—But to be Menelaus, I would conspire against destiny!

SHAKSPEARE.

Let such of our readers as we are instructing, bear in mind, and such of our readers as we are reminding, be pleased to remember that English society already afforded attestation in the blunting of its finer feelings, to the demoralizing influence of perpetual war.—At first, like a young maiden, it sickened at the sight of blood. At first, its holiest interests were invested in the great struggle protected by our national prayers. But, by degrees, it sent forth its brave to die, without a pang; and received the bulletin of their fate without a tear.

The court danced, sang, and diverted itself as joyfully as though the head of its aged monarch were not humbled in the dust, and a starving population busied in demolishing the power-looms that create so large a share of our commercial prosperity. A solitary event which just then startled the sympathies of the kingdom,—the death of its prime minister by the cowardly hand of an assassin,—created more sensation by trenching on the politer interests of society, than the miserable fact that our brave legions were feeding by hundreds and thousands the vultures of Catalonia. For *that* dispensation, enough that a fast-day, on which no one fasted, was set apart by the legislation!

But this was not all!—A society enrooted in soil so volcanic was bringing forth fruit as bitter as that of the Dead Sea. The circles which, by exaggerating in their courtiership the domesticity of Frogmore, had become *hum-drum*,—were now, by their apehood of Carlton House, falling into a contrary extreme; and *one* syllable of the epithet must be changed, to characterize the new era.—A

resentful husband was becoming almost as ridiculous as in an old comedy, and the shame of Menelaus had progressed into an honourable condition.

“Happy those whose wives were reared when the influence of King George and Queen Charlotte was supreme in the land!” exclaimed Lord Hardyng, in rendering honour due to the excellence of his charming wife and sisters-in-law. “We all know that a wry-necked king rendered full-bottomed wigs universal; and that during the last days of Louis XIV., no man cared to be a year younger than seventy-four. But to see grave prelates making their obeisance at Hertford House with as much reverence as formerly at Buckingham, teaches one that ‘the Divinity that doth hedge a King,’ or at all events a Prince Regent, is somewhat less than apostolical.”

The moment in which a King’s mistress is openly recognized and, as was the case in the present instance, openly *courted*, strikes a deadly blow at the morality of the nation at large. In that circular saloon in Manchester Square, now brightened by the *entente cordiale* of the French embassy, where the Otaheitan warcry is so pleasantly silenced by the still small voice of good breeding or the piquant accents of wit, *then* flourished a night-shade plant, that grew and grew, till it obscured the brilliant name of George the Fourth, insensibly interweaving its noxious berries among the laurels of his reign.

But for such a state of things, there had been less danger for the young and innocent Lady Anastasia! But the courtier world was as ostentatiously divesting itself of its panoply of virtue, as though it were the livery of disaffection. Ever in extremes, the hypocrisy heretofore so strait-laced, threw off the vertugadin to disguise under the flimsiest possible veil of decorum the aspect of “the reeling goddess with the zoneless waist;” and had the Regent been pleased to persist in his fluvial decorations and to perpetuate the fish-pond of the royal supper-table, the morality of Carlton House would have been content to appear as a mermaid!

Disastrous, therefore, was the chance which re-established Sir Hugh de Bayhurst in Grosvenor Square at a moment when the code of the dandies gave the law to the lords of the land.—For the respect commanded by the conduct of his wife, and perhaps a compunctious desire to obtain her forgiveness, had determined him to turn a deaf ear, for the future, to all jealous suggestions, all unworthy mistrusts. Lady Anastasia had entitled herself to his confidence; and his confidence she should have.

Above all, to ascribe to Philip Askham undue admiration of his wife, would have been a wanton and gratuitous renewal of offence. For three years past, the correspondence between his nephew and niece had placed the habits of Eden Castle completely before him, till, the persevering seclusion of the widower excited his respect and commiseration; and the pertinacity with which he refrained

from entering the doors of Grandison House, so far from originating in a disinclination to meet Philip Askham, arose solely from his contempt of the intriguing heartlessness of his mother-in-law.

As some atonement for the seclusion to which he had condemned the bridehood of Lady Anastasia, he installed her in Grosvenor Square with more than the magnificence originally projected; and promoted to the utmost her participation in the gaieties of the season. A new equipage,—new jewels,—new furniture, awaited her arrival; and though his alienated wife, conceiving them to be bestowed like the premium of a schoolmaster to a painstaking scholar, would have dispensed with acts of munificence that called forth no feelings of gratitude in return, the enthusiasm with which the liberality of her son-in-law was noted by Lady Grandison, reminded her that, if no gratification to her feelings, his magnificent gifts conveyed a public testimonial to her conduct. Under the peculiar circumstances of her fate, such an attestation had its value.

Next to his affection for his nephew, the desire to render her position brilliant and honourable seemed the predominant impulse of his life. But with little cause to judge favourably of his motives, she ascribed his concessions to personal vanity or family pride. Infirmary of health produced by incessant irritation of mind, afforded sufficient excuse for his own renunciation of society. But he was not the less desirous to extend their sphere of hospitality; and his face brightened,—nay, his spirit brightened, when he saw her presiding over the festivities of his house.

Who now so envied as Lady Anastasia de Bayhurst! The queen of the season, all London, with one exception, crowded to her door; and even in that instance, the feud created by the disputed guardianship of the children, accounted to the world for the coldness between Eden Castle and Bayhurst Hall.

“How deuced spoony of you, Phil, my boy, to go and quarrel with the De Bayhursts for doing the kindest thing by you in the world, just as their house was becoming the pleasantest in town!” cried Lord Middlemore, one day, to his brother-in-law, as they were lounging together in Rotten Row. “I don’t know how they manage it, but by George, they do things better than they are done any where, except at Carlton House.”

“Sir Hugh de Bayhurst has a princely fortune,” was the cold rejoinder of Philip Askham.

“I rather think *his* rent-roll would sing small beside *mine*; and *my* stables cost me somewhere about six thousand a year. But I promise you I never turned out such a pair of steppers as those grays of Lady Anastasia’s. They take the shine properly out of the Regent’s famous bays; and by George, the coachman’s as thorough-bred as the horses! Before we came up from Hurstwood, I had *my* old fellow fed on oil cake like a prize ox,—cram-

med for the hammercloth as you would a turkey for the spit;—and in spite of beef, pudding, and March ale four times a day, hang me if he's within a couple of stone of De Bayhurst's!—Only to look at *him* gives one the gout!"

"Whereas it gives one the jaundice to look at his master."

"Why yes!—he's getting as yellow as an old guinea or a kite's foot. It would be an act of charity to bestow his recipe for a complexion on Argyll; who, they say, gamboges as women rouge, to make himself look interesting!"

"I cannot say that De Bayhurst's complexion makes *him* look interesting."

"Ay—ay!—you never forgave him for cutting you out with dear Stasy; and since the quarrel about the children, I suppose you see even his yellow tinge, *en noir*. However, you'd a lucky miss of it with the lady; for between ourselves, Horace Trevor is making desperate play in that quarter; and Hertford House, you know, is bringing such things into fashion."

The eyes of Philip Askham flashed fire. Over his words, he had luckily more command.

"*Horace Trevor!*" was all he allowed himself to say, but with the most scornful accentuation.

"You and I may think him a bore," rejoined Lord Middlemore; "for he rides like a tailor; and by George, to see him at tennis, is better fun than Liston. But among women, I promise you, he passes for an agreeable fellow."

"*Among women*, perhaps. It strikes me that some distinction from so sweeping a clause is due to Lady Anastasia de Bayhurst."

"And why, pray?—Though handsome and clever, she is Lady Grandison's daughter after all; and *bon chien chasse de race*."

"Were *that* an infallible rule, *you* would be in the cabinet instead of the jockey club; and I, who do not know a pea from a bean, should preside over agricultural meetings."

"To be sure, one does not accuse Lady Anastasia of place-mongering, which might be equally hereditary," rejoined Middlemore.

"And by the way, they say,—that is, *nobody* says,—(for such is *my* translation of *on dit!*) that if the Wellesley negotiation had come off, and the Whigs been Moira-winked into a coalition, Lady Grandison was to have had a peerage for De Bayhurst as well as the Garter for the capital G!"

"By 'they,' and 'nobody,' I presume you mean Boodle's and Henry! I suspect we all make twice as much as it deserves of Lady Grandison's diplomacy. On seeing her carriage flying about from Apsley House to St. James's Place, or from Park Lane to Camelford House, people fancy she has been fighting for the Catholics, or declaring war with America; when most likely, she is canvassing for tickets for the Installation!"

"For the sake of my rents, I hope she *won't* declare war against

America!" cried Middlemore, laughing. "Between France, Ireland, and the Luddites, we've enough on our hands without crossing the Atlantic; and brother Jonathan is a confounded long shot;—I dare say we *shall* though! For yesterday at dinner, at Uppingham House, Henry preached in sixteen sections to prove that the primary object of the present administration, is peace;—just as one reads of Philanthropist Lenitive speechifying at a city meeting against the Slave-Trade, after screwing his tenants into the work-house, and weighing out rations to his servants' hall!"

Though wild with indignation on first hearing Lady Anastasia de Bayhurst's name coupled with that of the dissolute Trevor, on second thoughts, Philip congratulated himself that the clubs should have set up such a target for their scandalous shafts. So long as the attentions of the dandy were notorious, his own would escape observation.

For he was beginning to anticipate a time when his feud with De Bayhurst might be compromised, leaving to both parties the honours of war. The Hardynges and others of their mutual acquaintance, had long suggested that, for the sake of the children, a thousand scruples should be overlooked. Even Edward, who, in the independence of his present prosperity, had forgotten his grievances against his stepfather, expressed an earnest wish, in the solitary visit he had made to Eden Castle since the death of his mother, that "by-gones might be by-gones."

Had Askham been acquainted indeed with the early history of his poor wife, the grave of Evelyn ought to have pleaded, trumpet-tongued, against such a reconciliation; or had he surmised his share in the wrongs of Lady Anastasia, prudence might have interdicted all attempt to obtain access to Grosvenor Square. As it was, he listened only to the voice of selfish inclination; and accident soon ratified his capitulation of conscience.

Among Selina's warmest friends, was the young *débutante*, Sophia Askham;—not alone from the qualities that endeared her to every one; but because, ten years before in her childhood, Mrs. Saville had begged her out of severe disgrace with Miss Harrison for some *escapade* prompted by Richard and Claude; and in moments of peculiar emotion, Sophia fancied she could discern the looks of the kind mother beaming from those of the child.

She was an excellent girl;—a trifle less pretty than her elder sisters;—which deficiency, though to herself no subject of affliction, was the cause of some annoyance.—The heart of Lady Askham which, if small by nature, had through life been annually contracting, was set upon mortifying her sister Middlemore by securing four first-rate matches for her daughters; while *her* solitary chick was toughening in fruitless endeavours to double her single blessedness; and it was too provoking that the advantage of Lady Uppingham's auspicious patronage should be thrown away on a girl

who, with a brighter complexion, and an inch or two added to her stature, might have accomplished the best match of them all.

But notwithstanding these maternal hankerings after strawberry leaves, Sophia derived from the society of her amiable elder sisters an antidote to the poison so often sprinkled by ambitious mothers on the threshold of a young girl's life; and she continued to enjoy balls for dancing sake, and parties for chatting,—regardless of the designs which had prevented Helen Middlemore from finding pleasure in them when young, or solace, now that youth was past.

Though four years older than Selina, as the member of the Askham family nearest to her in age, Sophia was the confidante of all her little hopes and fears; or rather, hopes and wishes,—for fears she had none,—unless that Edward might get into a scrape at Eton, or Percy overheat himself, when playing in the square;—and one day, Miss Askham ventured to confide to her sister, Lady Uppingham, the great desire experienced by her young friend, whose musical genius was one of many valuable derivations from her mother, to hear the miraculous nightingale of the day,—the far-famed Catalani.—

“It would be so delightful a surprise if dear Margaret, instead of taking *her* as usual to the opera, would for once be so very kind as to give her place to Selina.”

At such a proposition, the Marchioness was both vexed and pleased; pleased with the good-nature of her sister; vexed with herself, for not having sooner suggested a gratification for the motherless girl which did not militate against her strict notions on the subject of young-lady immurement. Philip raised no objections.—Selina accepted, with smiles on her lips and tears in her eyes; and, after dining at Uppingham House, accompanied the Marchioness to her box.

As unpretending in deportment as became her high worldly position and *unworldly* superiority, Lady Uppingham was not one of those whose fussy entrance into public places, fixes every glance upon their box, that the vulgar may exclaim, “How well Lady—is looking to-night, and how beautifully dressed!”—or the fine, “Whom has she with her?”—She came, unheard,—and remained, unseen;—her attention undisturbed from the opera by curiosity to know whether the Duchess of Rutland, or Lady Charlemont, or Lady Ossulston were in good looks; or whether Lady Lynchmore, who occupied an opposite box, wore a lace cap or a silver turban. It consequently excited little notice in the house that, opposite to her half-drawn curtain, the expressive face of Miss Askham was, “for that night only,” replaced by that of an angel!—

Being Tuesday, the audience was thin; and important debates in both Houses securing Lady Uppingham from visitors, there was no drawback on the delight with which Selina gave herself up to the ecstasy produced by the first powerful combination of harmony

in which her fine ear had ever luxuriated. A chorus—an orchestra—were new to *her*,—to whom the science of mind was familiar; and so powerful was the influence on her senses of that novel excitement, and so speaking the expression of her countenance responsive to every note, that Lady Uppingham sat contemplating her inspired face, as she would have done that of St. Cecilia.—Never had she seen beauty so superhuman!—

But from a distance, other eyes were fixed upon that lovely face, with still deeper emotion. As if to confirm by an exception the rule of Shakspeare concerning love of music, Sir Hugh de Bayhurst was so infatuated a Philharmonic, as never to miss an opera. It was one of his few personal enjoyments.—Yet so slight was his interest in the sparkling world of fashion, whose pleasures, at least, sympathized with his own, that, during the intervals of performance he seldom quitted his place in the pit. If his listless eyes wandered, it was towards the box of Lady Anastasia, or his detested mother-in-law, of Lady Uppingham, or her sister Susan; and he was consequently among the first to perceive the new companion of the Marchioness.

Another moment, and pale as ashes, with the cold dew of dismay starting on his forehead, he staggered from his place; and but that the opposing wall of the lobby sustained him, would have fallen to the ground. Evelyn was before him,—the long-lost, unforgotten Evelyn,—wearing the very looks she used to wear in Holmehurst Hanger; when, seated on the mossy bank with her sweet face upturned towards the old chesnut-trees with their embowering blossoms, she listened to the summer choir!—So startling was the impression of her presence, that the sudden contraction of his heart reduced him almost to insensibility.

Returning reason suggested of course that he had seen his brother's daughter; and, but for the impossibility of subduing his struggling emotions into the decorum indispensable to approach a woman so habitually composed as Lady Uppingham, he would have hastened to the box, seized between his own the hands of the lovely girl, and poured forth all the compunctious feelings of his heart. But the iron armour of social convention was between them. It was forbidden him to tell her how much he loved her, not as her father's child, but as her mother's image; and, after returning into the house, to gaze unobserved for a few minutes on the angelic face that recalled so vividly the sufferings and errors of the past, the unhappy man hurried from the house, and went out and wept bitterly.

Meanwhile Miss Saville's appearance was exciting some sensation.

“Guess whom you have got opposite to you, mother!” cried Lord Delvyn, bursting into Lady Lynchmore's box with the impetuosity of a spoiled son. “Horace Trevor asked me, just now be-

hind the scenes, if Lady Uppingham's virtues had been rewarded with the attendance of a guardian angel for protection; and though pretty sure that he only wanted to get rid of me, by piquing my curiosity, off I bolted into the house."—

"To look at Lady Uppingham?"—interrupted Emilia de Lacy."

"To see her companion; when behold, who should the guardian angel be, but my little wife!—Emilia and Harriet and Hester must contrive to get off before she comes out," continued he, addressing Lady Lynchmore,—whose glass was now directed towards Lady Uppingham's box,—“for I promise you Lina will take the shine out of them all!”

The verdict of the rattling young man was soon confirmed, not only by his sister, but by the fashionable loungers who visited their box.—Even the fastidious Sir Walter Lesly admitted that he was unprepared to see the *rose pompon* of Eden Castle, expand into such perfect beauty; and again and again, the jealous mother was forced to remind them, that if a perfect beauty, she was still only a child.—

The impression thus accidentally produced on the feelings of Sir Hugh de Bayhurst, was fated to lay the foundation of painful and penitential considerations. He reflected with wonder on the indifference into which he had suffered himself to fall towards the daughter of Evelyn. She had existed in his thoughts only as an instrument of vengeance. But she was too nearly connected with all that was dearest to him, to admit of perseverance in this voluntary abnegation. She was too like her mother,—too dear to Edward,—to be otherwise than precious to himself.

To see her again, and with more deliberate survey, was his first object; and though the following Saturday proved the justice of his surmise that the visit to the opera was to be a solitary indulgence, he discovered without much difficulty that, every afternoon, when the park was crowded, the children from Brook Street accompanied the governess into Grosvenor Square;—a *bel respiro* which, though hitherto disdained for the Mall, was thenceforward his favourite haunt.

There, protecting the delicate little Percy from the rough advances of other children of his age, he again beheld, revived, the lost angel of Holmehurst Grange: no longer under the spirit-stirring influence of the divine strains of Mozart, but full of grace, full of gentleness, full of goodness,—gay, girlish, sportive,—light as the breeze and bright as the sunshine:—lifting the little boy in her arms to the pink hawthorns, whose fragrance reminded him of Eden Castle;—or, seated with him on the turf of the platform knotting daisy chains for his amusement, falling into an instinctive grace of attitude worthy to afford a model to Nollekens.

How he longed to claim her for his own!—How bitterly he reproached himself for having assigned her, like a punishment in-

flicted, to Philip Askham! But that her presence had solaced the last hours of her mother, which his conscience assured him were hastened by deprivation of her son, he could scarcely have obtained his own forgiveness. He refrained, however, from accosting her. Whitsuntide was at hand; when Edward might accompany him into the square, and bespeak his sister's affection for the most indulgent of uncles.

Such were the the circumstances and predilections which smoothed the way for a reconciliation, at one time as improbable of accomplishment as a coalition between Liverpool and Canning. The memory of Evelyn was as a Catholic Question interposed between Philip Askham and Sir Hugh de Bayhurst. Yet before the London season was at an end, each having an object to forward by a renewal of acquaintance, they had actually broken bread together; or rather, interchanged their Château Margaux and potage à la reine!

"What a world it is!"—observed Lord Hardyng to his wife, as they sat enjoying a fervid July evening under the old cedar-tree, at Eske Hill,—with their elder boy rolling on the grass with a favourite setter of the late lord, which seldom quitted their side.—"Whom do you think I met together, arm in arm, this morning in St. James's Street?"

"Henry and Sir Francis Burdett?"

"Guess again,—and with a still wider span!"

"My sister Margaret and Lady Grandison!"

"Arm in arm in St James's Street!—coming out of Brookes's?"—

"So, so! You, who told me at dinner as an excuse for want of news, that you had not found a moment for your club!"—

"Our friend Jekyl has just got the appointment of Attorney-general to the Prince, or as I live by bread, Madam Cross-question, you should be recommended for the office!" cried her husband, affectionately patting her on the shoulder. "But does it follow, in the way of circumstantial evidence, that because I met people coming out of Brookes's, I myself went *in*? I was simply proceeding from Ridgway's to the House of Lords, down St. James's Street, and along Pall Mall."

"From *Ridgway's*?—Your pamphlet is out, then?"

"Not before Monday. I corrected the last proof this morning; after which, I had to listen to a two hours' speech from Lord Longwind, in a dull debate on the same question;—which was like hearing my own tune droned through a bagpipe!—But you do not interest yourself about my negative and positive attraction in St. James's Street.—What say you to Philip and Sir Hugh de Bayhurst?"—

"That extremes meet!—And why not?—Better for the children's sake,—better for their own!"

"Consistency is certainly out of fashion. But theirs is a coali-

tion I never thought to witness! To forgive imaginary injuries is, perhaps, the greatest stretch of the magnanimity of modern times. What Philip has to complain of from De Bayhurst, I have yet to learn."

"As an early friend of Lady Anastasia, he may resent the unhappy life which the Scotneys believe her to lead. Like the divinity in Villamediana's fable, he may choose the laurel that resisted *his* flame, to enjoy impunity from the thunderbolts of Jove. Do you remember—

'Viviras laurel esento
Aun á los rayos de Jove,
Que no es quien sientra otras llamas
Quien resistió mis ardores?'"

"Which would be very pat,—but that it is coldness rather than '*ardores*' of which that Jupiter Tonans De Bayhurst, stands accused. But I don't pretend to interpret their family feuds; and, since they are all on velvet again, on velvet long may they remain. Life is not long enough to be wasted in quarrels!"

Lord Hardyng had, indeed, better occupation for his time. Having resigned, at his father's death, the office scarcely compatible with his dignity as a peer and unessential to his fortunes, he devoted the leisure thrown upon his hands, to the study of abstract politics and literary pursuits. A favourite guest at Holland House, he was an able contributor to the Edinburgh Review; and though it was asserted of him by the Donothings of the Middlemore class, as by Tacitus of Agricola, that, "*in prima juvenia studium philosophiæ acrius, ultra quam concessum Romano an Senatori hausisse,*" his name already commanded respect as the author of a masterly pamphlet on Toleration; one of the foundation-stones of the long subsequent triumph of Catholic Emancipation.

Neither he nor Emma suffered themselves to be so carried away by the current of fashionable life, as to lose sight of their happy fireside and rational pursuits. While, deluded by the mirage of Hertford House and the confidence of Castlereagh, the Regent exclaimed like Pompey, —

The people love me, and the sea is mine;
My power's a crescent, and my auguring hope
Foresees 'twill reach the full,—

Lord Hardyng was equally sanguine in his trust of future distinction:—sanguine, however, because *his* "auguring hope" was supported by his own efforts. No one knew better that it is only on Virgil's tomb, laurels are of spontaneous growth;—and his industry was stimulated by the consciousness of having a debt of honour to acquit towards the memory of his father. If such names as Douglas or Howard convey a double duty of loyalty and honour, the son of the able and excellent Lord Hardyng inherited especial responsibility of zeal in the service of his country.

“Hardynge reminds me of the retired tallow-chandler, who stipulated with his successor for the privilege of assisting in the business on melting-day,” said Lord Middlemore to Emma,—indignant at his frequent failure to decoy his brother-in-law from the desk, to join him on his drag, for expeditions to race-courses and prize-fights. “By George, he works harder now he’s an idle man, than he did at the office;—harder by half than Henry, who is always to be had for asking for,—if any one cared to ask him;—and *he* gets upwards of two thousand a-year out of our pockets, for doing the business of the nation!”

“My husband works for honour,” retorted Emma; “a harder task-mistress than the Treasury.”

“But I promise you Henry is beginning to work for a task-mistress more savage than Mrs. Brownrigg!” cried Middlemore, laughing. “Henry has the worst of it just now!—In making up to Lady Emilia de Lacy, he has not only to assure Lady Lynchmore that she is slight as a tread-paper,—but to laugh at all Lynchmore’s jokes,—and answer fifty times a day his inquiries as to what the Liverpool cabinet mean to do for Ireland!”

“I wish his suit were likely to be successful,” observed Emma,—earnestly.

“What,—with a rattling Irish girl,—with more sisters than thousand pounds to her fortune?”—

“The joyous reckless, *au jour le jour* life of the Lynchmores, would be the very thing to unstarch him!”

“*Unstarch* him?”—reiterated Lord Middlemore, who, though ignorant as became the pupil of the learned Doctor Dactyl, possessed the sure instinct of a well-bred hound. “Why, you would ruin him at once!—All very well for an only son, like your husband, to talk like other people, and think as other people don’t. But a younger brother like Henry, who has to speechify his way in the world, must talk as other people don’t, and think as they *do*!—I’m deuced proud of all my brothers-in-law. But, by George, I’m proudest of Henry; for with half as much *nous* as the others, he contrives to feed a great multitude with his five barley loaves and two small fishes! Henry has got the whip-hand of Hardynge! Did you see the rap at Hardynge’s famous speech on the repeal of the Orders in Concil, in the leader of yesterday’s Morning Post?”

“And what then?”—cried Emma, firing up for her husband. “There is an Arabian proverb that people only throw stones at trees laden with fruit.”

“Palm trees, of course, if Arabian. But ’tis Henry, not your husband, you know, who’s so famous for *dates*.—There’s a pun for you, about as good as your proverb! Well,—good bye!—Try to make up your mind to see Hardynge play Violino Secondo; for though he may have the power of writing clever pamphlets, Henry has the still greater one of preventing people from reading them!”

As the knowing turn-out of the coaching cousin rattled through the sweep-gates of Eske Hill, Emma had some difficulty in overpowering the vexation his quizzing had created. Before the dust of his wheels subsided, however, she was restored to her usual good-humour by self-gratulation on having escaped companionship for life with one whose discourse, like that of Parolles, was “chough’s language,—gabble enough, and good enough;” and of whom even Susan could not deny that—

His laughs were boisterous, as his wit was coarse,
Loving her best of all things—but his horse.—

CHAPTER XXVI.

L’injustice, qui révolte les petits esprits, ramène les âmes élevées en elles-mêmes ; et leur communique une sorte d’humilité qui touche à la fierté par un endroit imperceptible.

ROUSSEAU.

To see her is to love her,
And love but her for ever ;
For nature made her what she is,
And ne’er made sic anither!—
The powers above will tent her,—
This fortune sha’na steer her;—
She’s like themselves sae lovely
That ill they’ll near let ne’er her!

BURNS.

Oh! pardon me,—my brother Edward’s child.—

SHAKSPEARE.

Of those who witnessed the reconciliation between Eden Castle and Bayhurst Hall, the person who might have been supposed to experience most pleasure, but who saw it with least satisfaction, was Selina. Even to herself, she could scarcely say *why*. From her mother, she had never heard a word tending to incriminate her father’s family. Susan had been equally reserved.—Yet an intuitive repugnance warned her against opening her heart to those who had not opened their doors to her parents.

It was in vain that Lady Anastasia courted her affection by costly gifts and persevering endearments. She was grateful, but not affectionate. Some latent apprehension, perhaps, that the invitation of which her promise to her mother prohibited acceptance, might now be offered, kept her better feelings in reserve; and far less precious in her eyes was the diamond locket containing Edward’s hair presented to her by her uncle, than the hair without the locket,—or the meanest of the trinkets contained in her mother’s old-fashioned desk,—or even the watch bestowed on her by old Sir Erasmus.

"I wonder," said Emma to her mother-in-law, one day at Eske Hill, when, at the close of the season Philip and his family repaired to Bayhurst, ere they took their departure for Eden Castle for the winter,—“I wonder whether Sir Hugh will find courage to point out the old Grange to that darling girl, or take her to visit Holme-hurst Hanger?”

To satisfy her interest in the subject, Lady Hardynges even applied to her brother at the rectory for information concerning the guests at Bayhurst. But the Scotneys saw less of Lady Anastasia now that she was encircled by gayer associates;—not from want of invitation,—but want of zest!—The Scotneys loved to comfort her, when in trouble; or encourage her, when intent on improvement; but amidst the swarm of London insects buzzing in her ears, the still small voice of reason would have been inaudible. To Lady Hardynges inquiries, they could answer only that Philip and the children were entertained with the utmost pomp and show; and that the Hall was crowded with company.

Mr. Scotney, however, could not forbear to add that, among his parishioners were many who remembered the lovely mother of Selina; nay a few aged crones who recollected even her grandmother;—by whom the fair face of the child, which was as it were the face of an angel, had been seen with equal wonder and delight. On beholding her the first Sunday in the Bayhurst pew, they had scarcely refrained from crying aloud that Evelyn Monson was once more among them. The same seraphic expression, the same unworldly demeanour, which had so captivated poor Edward Saville and his savage brother, seemed revived in *her* from whom Sir Hugh de Bayhurst could scarcely withdraw his eyes.

Towards *him*, strange to relate, Selina entertained kinder feelings than towards Lady Anastasia. So clear-sighted are the instincts of youth, that Selina was conscious of being better loved by her silent and undemonstrative uncle, than by the wife so unwearied in indulgence.

Accident, however, had some share in the preference. Mr. Askham having fulfilled his intentions of causing the miniature to be copied which had been sacrificed by his jealous rage, the artist, in vainly attempting to follow the partially effaced lineaments, had produced only a likeness of Sir Hugh; whose features were exactly those of his brother, deprived of their benignity of expression; and having learned to cherish this image as that of their father, Selina naturally attached herself to one who seemed its breathing personation. The beautiful equestrian sketch of Edward Saville in the Bayhurst library, influenced less her misguided feelings of filial reverence, than the face of her living uncle.

But for these misgivings, the sojourn of Selina at Bayhurst would have been only too delightful. The joy of old Susan, on revisiting, after more than a dozen years of absence, her native village, was

scarcely less heartfelt than that of the daughter of the Savilles in learning to appreciate the present prosperity and future honours of her brother;—as evinced in the beautiful apartments devoted to his use,—his books, greyhounds, ponies, pheasants,—and the thousand trophies attesting on every side the greatness of their ancient line. Her interest was divided between the curious old monuments of the Monsons in Holmehurst Church, and the frightful portraits of the earlier Bayhursts, certified by their distortions as of an epoch whose imperfection constitutes a school. In those alabaster faces, or Holbeinized features, she tried to retrace the countenance of her parents; or in some recumbent Monson with “his feet upon a couchant hound,” or youthful Saville in doublet and hose, fancied she could discover a likeness to Edward,—till those ancestral faces became to her as the faces of friends.

Still greater however was the pleasure, when the riding party (which, being thanks to Elshie and early experience, an expert horsewoman, she was often permitted to join,) meditated some expedition so much beyond her strength, that she was left alone to wander over the stately library, rich with the escutcheons of the Bayhursts, and richer with the learning of centuries;—or to enjoy unobserved, unmolested, the glorious gallery of paintings.—For to *her* the place was enchanted ground!

Within those antique rooms,
Great powers abide, that guard the place from wrong,
The strength of Michael,—Raphael's angel grace,—
Grave Titian's splendour,—Paolo's sunset dreams;—
And deities who once, (so poets write,)
Dwelt on Olympus, from their heights come down
And sit all round in marble!—

And beyond,—
Beyond the deeds or dreams of beauteous art,—
Keep silent watch the spirits of human power,—
Creative of the things that shine below!—

For Selina, the vivid imagination of youth supplied the more cultivated tastes which, on his visit to Bayhurst, had rivetted the mind of Lord Hardyng to the same enthusiastic contemplation; and, after spending the morning in the glorious world those pictures and her own fancy called into existence, she acquired so exalted an intelligence of countenance, that the gay equestrians, on their return from their ride, could scarcely repress a cry of admiration. On returning to her less attractive home, to be claimed once more by the school room and governess, she carried with her a stock of new impressions and ideas,—a mine of intellectual treasure to be worked out for her future enrichment.

Eden Castle, however, so far from remaining a dreary pile, afforded strong evidence of the altered habits of its master. Either piqued by the example of Hexham, or instructed by that of Bayhurst, he had studied the art of rendering his house pleasant; and

throughout the autumn, the mansion of the worldly man was crowded by men and women of the world.

It is true that Lady Askham, who, in spite of repeated declarations that she would never cross the threshold so long as Philip presided there, now sought an invitation, (to follow up on the young heir of Lynchmore Castle her projects for Sophia,) expressed privately to her prim lady of the bedchamber her disgust at the diminution of the establishment,—regardless that her son was in the enjoyment of a sixth part of the income which, in his father's time, upheld the pomposities of the place. But every one else was content; and after seeing Lord Delvyn and Sophia return arm-in-arm from a long ramble with Selina in Eden Chase, even her ladyship admitted that her discontents arose less from the absence of the coach and four with its postilions and its outriders, the portly house-steward and consequential housekeeper, than from the changes which the lapse of five years had effected in the neighbourhood.

Her place knew her no longer!—No Mrs. Gwatkin to be fretted into envy by her account of the excellent establishment of her three married daughters!—No Dr. Hacket to doze through her prognostications that her son Henry would creep page by page through the Red Book, (like a mite ascending the great pyramid,) to a lordship in the Treasury, affording hope to him who had so strenuously preached the infallibility of the House of Askham, of a silk apron or lawn sleeves. For even as the name of Simprems had given place to that of Boswell on the flaming brass-plate of the Market Place, a son of the Scotneys of Holmehurst now replaced the incumbent, who, after mouldering through life in the pulpit, was now mouldering in the vault below;—the young rector being nominated ostensibly as a kinsman of the Hardynges, but in reality, on the recommendation of Lady Anastasia.

In spite of the Mansfield Street flannel and opodeldoc, even Nelly Knowles was now a widow; and a few fossile remains in the Edenbourne almshouse were the sole remaining contemporaries of the dowager. By leading the life of a tortoise in its shell, Sir Erasmus had come to pass as non-existent;—no one seeing him but his servants;—unless, perhaps, once a year, Dr. Boswell,—when the scythe of the influenza had mowed down some aged member of the household at the Lodge.

But while fretting over her lost consequence, and harassed by the complaints of her maid that there was no steward's room, as at Uppingham or Hurstwood,—no head coachman, no head-gardener, no any of the dignitaries whose much-ado-about-nothing converts a great house into a mountain in labour,—Lady Askham was not only consoled by the increasing intimacy with Hexham Hall, which the prepossessions of her favourite Henry as well as the interest of Sophia, induced her to cultivate, but by the improvement perceptible in the puny offspring of her son.

Of all her grand children, Percy was the favourite.—The little Earl of Rosneath and the promising offspring of Emma and Susan, were much less to *her* than the child whose name in the Peerage was distinguished by an asterisk, as only son of the heir presumptive of the Barony of Askham,—so long as to the name of Percy, fifth Lord Askham, was affixed the qualification of “unmarried.”—The future representative of the family honours she shared by marriage and descent, had the strongest claim on her selfish pride.

A certain gentleness of deportment which little Percy had acquired by long indisposition and the softening companionship of Selina, was a greater merit in the eyes of the formal old lady, than the boisterous animation of Lady Uppingham’s handsome son; and accustomed to elderly people by the fondness of old Susan, he took in better part the caresses of his grandame, than the more fastidious darlings of Eske Hill.

And through Percy, Lady Askham reached the heart of Selina!—Unaccustomed to see him petted, she could scarcely refrain from pressing her lips to the withered hand that drew towards her the neglected child of her mother.

“What shall I do when you are gone?” said the affectionate girl, throwing her arms round Sophia Askham, whom she loved like a sister. “You cannot think how I shall miss you.”

“You will have Lady Anastasia here in a few days” replied Lord Delvyn, who had ridden over with a message from his mother,—a service he was always ready to discharge towards Eden Castle,—though to no other house in the neighbourhood. “Last night, at Hexham, I heard them making up a dinner-party for her.”

“Lady Anastasia is not Sophia. Besides, all sorts of people have been invited to meet her; and to *me*, the castle is not the same place when we have company in the house.”

“Miss Askham and I are much obliged to you, Lina!”—said Lord Delvyn, laughing.

“Sophia is at home. And I do not call *you* company. You are nearly the same to me as Edward.”

“My sisters, then, are obliged to you,—who love you like one of themselves.”

“When you are at Oxford, I am sometimes many days without so much as hearing of Hexham!” replied Selina, somewhat despondingly. “My time is spent wholly in the school-room. It is only on Sophy’s account that Mrs Markham has granted my present holidays.”

Neither Selina nor her companions were likely to imagine that they had been accorded at Lady Askham’s desire, only that her presence might afford a sanction to the drives, rides, and rambles of her daughter with Lord Delvyn; and though, in spite of these,—in spite of sundry little dances at Hexham and boatings on the Eden,

the dowager was forced to proceed to Uppingham Manor without having secured her son-in-law the fourth, she was satisfied that Lynchmore Castle was their own; that the young lord was waiting only till he had taken his degree and quitted Oxford, to apply for the sanction of his parents to his proposals.—“No one who saw him could doubt that he was deeply in love.”

No sooner were they all gone, than Selina, under the slavery of perpetual study, was beginning to experience the verification of her presentiments, when a slight incident communicated new interest to her existence. Except for attendance on divine service, she had little communication with Edenbourne. Her commissions were executed by the servants; and since the recent change at the rectory, she had not a single acquaintance in the town. It was only through Susan she was aware that Eastfield had been uninhabited for the last three years; the trustees, who could not sell the property, being apparently unable to let it.

On returning, however, with Lady Askham from her farewell visit to Hexham Hall, she noticed as they drove past, that workmen were busy with the entrance gate; and was debarred from inquiries only by a dislike to recur to the the sacred subject of her former home in the presence of her companions. But a few days after their departure, she claimed from Mrs. Markham, one fine September morning, a long-promised walk to Edenbourne, to visit the infant school newly founded by Mr. Scotney;—and on passing the shrubbery belt of Eastfield, perceived that the work in progress consisted of a solid stone wall, half as high again as the cottage.

It was impossible to refrain from inquiries; in answer to which, it appeared that “the property had been lately bought by the old gentleman at the Lodge, who was taking of it within his ring fence.” The original suggestion of Mrs. Gwatkin respecting the cottage, was at length adopted; though not till the realization of the original objection of her brother;—for now, alas! there was indeed “nothing in it!”

While Selina was listening to the explanation, it was confirmed by the appearance of the dusky face of Sir Erasmus’s Indian servant, peering over the white shoulders of the mason they were addressing, over whose labours he was officiating as overseer; and joyful was the surprise of the grizzly old Hindoo, on recognizing “Miss ‘Elina,” whom as a child he had often carried in his arms at the Lodge. Moutiar could scarcely recover his presence of mind to resume in a rational manner her affectionate inquiries after his master.

The name of the donor of the watch was well known to Mrs. Markham; so that when her pupil expressed a desire to visit the old place, as the cottage would be accessible for the future solely through the grounds of the Lodge, she not only saw no objection, but thankfully embraced an opportunity of resting after so long a walk.

While she took possession of a garden seat on the lawn, under the shade of a fine service tree just then brightened into beauty by its coral berries, Selina, with tears in her eyes, gave herself up to the painful pleasure of revisiting that sacred spot. Every tree, every shrub, every blade of grass seemed instinct with recollections of her mother. *Here*, she had been chidden for some childish transgression,—there commended,—every where tended and beloved!—How happy she was *then*, under shelter of an affection that covered her round as with an angel's wings!

The little garden was now a wilderness. Untouched throughout the last three years,—for since the death of Mrs. Askham it had been unavowedly let to Sir Erasmus till his purchase could be completed,—the plants and flowers had interlaced and reproduced themselves, as in some Eastern jungle. The old man would not allow them to be cultivated, lest anything should be inadvertently removed which had been touched by the hand of Evelyn; and, as in Paradise, nature was sole gardener of the place. The birds and bees had taken possession of its solitude, as of Holmehurst Hanger. The lawn was swept by the branches of the untrimmed trees. The gravel walks were overgrown with moss. The porch seemed scarcely passable from the entanglement of clematis and honeysuckle masking the entrance. The China roses had climbed to the summit of a tall cypress tree; blooming there in the sunshine, like happy hopes surmounting the dreariness of the grave. A thousand times more fragrant than of old,—a thousand times more bright with blossoms,—the memory of Evelyn seemed embalmed in the sweetness of her favourite home!

“And whose is *that*?”—faltering Selina, when she recovered herself sufficiently to speak,—pointing out to Moutiar a Bath chair standing near the door.

“My poor master's, Miss 'Elina. I draw him here every day when the weather is fine,” replied the old man, lowering his voice as if afraid of being overheard.

“He is *here* then, and you did not tell me!” cried the agitated girl, instantly hastening to the house. “At length, I shall be able to thank him!”—

It was in vain that Moutiar endeavoured to detain her, uncertain whether even one so privileged might be admitted to the recluse. In a moment, she was in the little drawing-room,—now at the side,—now at the feet of the emaciated old man, for whom that humble dwelling constituted a shrine. Startled and overcome, he called her “his child,—his dear child!”—and it was so long since that holy name had greeted the ear of Selina,—so long since she had wept with unrestrained tenderness over the precious associations it evoked,—that there needed no answer to his appeal. Their tears fell together.

By degrees, composure was restored; and then, what a multitude

of questions betrayed the unaltered interest of her scarcely recognizable old friend!—Edward,—he wanted to hear of Edward,—his proficiency at Eton,—his pursuits at Bayhurst,—the prospects of his after life. He was evidently prepared to find the intelligence of a woman, in one he had so lately left a child;—for of herself, he asked not a single question. She was the image of her mother;—and for *him*, that resemblance comprehended every excellence and every charm.

While they were still talking, forgetting everything in the past, Mrs. Markham made her appearance to claim her pupil. Aware that the old gentleman before her had been the intimate friend of Selina's late mother, and Eastfield her earliest home, she was in no haste to interrupt their interview; and when he politely requested permission for Miss Saville to accompany him a few hundred yards through his grounds, to see the new road he had made from the Cottage to the Lodge, she considerably forbore to intrude on those whose recent emotions were still so manifest. Having agreed to await at Eastfield her pupil's return, while the Bath chair and its attendants disappeared through the shrubberies, she gladly resumed her seat.

The minutes slipped by, however, till so long appeared the time of Selina's absence, that the good governess grew first impatient, then angry, then alarmed. Miss Saville had been gone more than half an hour,—nearly an hour,—doubtless carried away by her inclinations to accompany her old friend as far as the house; and thither Mrs. Markham resolved to proceed, in pursuit of the truant.

Away she went, accordingly; following the trace of the wheels on the finely gravelled road, bordered on either side by shelving shrubberies of choice American plants, and barberry bushes drooping to the ground under the weight of their scarlet fruitage. By degrees, however, the plantation assumed a graver character. Kalmias and rhododendrons were replaced by the feathering tamarisk,—the arbor vitæ,—the arbutus,—the cypress,—the gloomy yew; till at length, she discovered at a distance, thrown out by the dark foliage of a grove of pine trees, the white gleam of the chapel which she had often heard cited at Edenbourne as the favourite resort of the pious recluse.

There, doubtless, had Selina taken refuge. For near it stood the Bath chair, with the servant in attendance; and before she could attain the spot, she saw her young charge issue from the half-open door and descend the marble steps;—not with her usual light-footed alacrity,—but heavily and sadly,—pausing every now and then on her road towards the cottage, and placing her hand upon her heart, as if to repress the tumult of her feelings.

When they met, Selina threw herself into her arms, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

“Forgive me for detaining you so long,” said she, when her composure was sufficiently restored to admit of replying to the interrogations of her anxious companion; “and be still more kind, in forbearing to inquire what detained me.—I could not leave that dear old friend, overcome by distress!—We have been weeping and praying together. Do not ask me why or where.—The secret is *his*.—He would grieve to have it known.—Let us go home again, dear Mrs. Markham, if you are sufficiently rested. I cannot,—no, *indeed I cannot* enter Edenbourne to-day.”

Satisfied from her knowledge of Selina’s nature that the secret thus withheld from her was of a blameless nature, and perhaps in some degree cognizant of the truth, the kind governess refrained from a single inquiry.—All that was at present necessary was to pacify the poor girl’s emotions.—Time would open her heart.

Selina’s heart was always open; but on this occasion, the tenderest delicacy of feeling sealed her lips. Though unaware that her venerable friend had ever pretended to be more to her mother than a devoted friend, that friendship was sanctified by the grave into something of a solemn mystery.

The temple into which, leaning on the arm of the faithful Moutiar, he had guided her steps, was consecrated as an expiatory chapel. Constructed throughout of Carrara marble, it contained only a simple altar—only a nameless monument. No inscription, save the words “*SPES UNICA*” carved on the wall above a colossal cross of the same spotless material;—before which, knelt a female figure,—Faith, if you will;—but to all who had ever beheld the object of his veneration,—Evelyn,—only Evelyn!—

Indignant at the sordid proportions of a tablet erected by the widower in the chancel at Edenbourne, at the foot of the stately monuments of his family, inscribed with a pompous tribute to his own sorrows and the merits of the dead,—yet unprivileged to amend its meanness by a public token of respect, Sir Erasmus consoled himself by lavishing the ample means at his command on a spot to which he daily repaired, to mingle in his prayers the name of his lost angel, with supplications that the Almighty, who had taken her to himself, would give grace to those who survived, to imitate her virtues.

Such was the holy ground to which Selina, with a bursting heart, had accompanied her aged friend. Not a word was breathed to indicate the object of the chapel. But on her mother’s angelic face alone, had she beheld such rapture of pious exaltation as irradiated the eyes of that kneeling saint!

A few days afterwards, before she had found courage to acquaint her stepfather, (without allusion to the unusual circumstances attending the meeting,) with her visit to Eastfield and interview with their venerable neighbour, arrived the De Bayhursts, on their first visit to Eden Castle: and from that moment, the will and pleasure

of Lady Anastasia became paramount in the house. It was no moment for reminiscences of the past.

It struck Selina that her uncle was looking grave,—graver than he was wont to do at Bayhurst.—But this was not surprising.—His unjust estrangement from his brother's widow could not fail to recur to his mind in visiting the neighbourhood where she had so long struggled against poverty, and so meekly resigned herself to death.—Young as Selina was, and ignorant of the true nature of their relative position, she fully understood that he must feel conscience-stricken at Edenbourne.

Aware that, on pretence of a private errand at the post-office, he had visited Eastfield without obtaining admittance, and, on pretence of antiquarian zeal, the church where her poor mother was lying, how great would have been her satisfaction to conduct him to the sacred spot known only to herself and the grey-headed mourner of the Lodge : where the memory of her they mourned was kept holier than in any other on earth, save the grateful hearts of the poor.

In defiance of the gaieties of the neighbourhood,—the mirth of Lord Lynchmore,—the hospitalities of the Castle, every day, the depression of the guest seemed to augment.—Listless and pre-occupied, he ceased to join the riding parties to which he was so poor an addition ; and, on pretence of indisposition, retired to rest before the music or dancing of the evening commenced. He sometimes carried off little Percy to his dressing-room, and amused the child for hours, when none were nigh to notice them ; or engaged Selina to show him her favourite walks in the Chase—sitting or sauntering by her side, in silent abstraction. When his little niece expressed to Lady Anastasia her fears that her uncle was not sufficiently amused at Eden Castle, she was assured that he was subject to these fits of despondency, and that no notice must be taken ;—and it was perhaps in pursuance of this system of studied disregard, that she suffered *her* attention to be absorbed by her host.

The emotions experienced by Sir Hugh de Bayhurst were in fact greater than even himself was prepared for. He had fancied that unhappy passion to have subsided in his nature, like the sinking of blood into the earth ; and that the recent routine of his domestic life, so nearly amounting to happiness, had effaced all trace of his youthful attachment. He had honestly exerted himself for its extirpation. Ere he accomplished the reconciliation with Philip Askham which was to reunite him with Selina, he had sworn within himself to avoid all recurrence to the past ;—and so long as his word remained unbroken, had been able to preserve the semblance of courtesy towards his once detested rival.

But the circumstances into which he was forced, forced back in their turn upon his mind all he had so strenuously endeavoured to forget. Under that roof, how could he do otherwise than think

of Evelyn!—Almost within view of the humble retreat into which she had been hunted by his malice, and of the church where she was at rest,—her homes for time and eternity,—how could he refrain from pressing her feeble boy to his heart;—how forbear to regard with renewed and still increasing hatred the man who had wiped from her eyes the tears he had caused to flow!—

For of his real grounds of indignation against her husband, he knew as little, as Philip of the measure of offence of the man by whom she had been aggrieved and persecuted.

To Selina, meanwhile, the glee of Lady Anastasia was almost more annoying than the sadness of her uncle. Never had she seen her so gay! Towards her husband, her manner had lost its deference—towards herself, its gentleness!—Instead of her former high-bred self-possession, her tone was wild and abrupt. At Hexham, her exhilaration became more girlish than that of the De Lacys,—at Eden Castle her restlessness was unappeasable.—Her movements were hurried and irregular, as those of a watch whose main-spring is at fault.

Like others of her age, less curious about causes than effects, the little girl was at no pains to examine into the origin of the change. It was enough that the evil existed.

One day, the De Lacys having driven over to rehearse, during the absence of the gentlemen for their pheasant shooting, an act of the opera of “*L’Inganno Felice*,” which they were getting up for representation at Hexham,—after luncheon, when the performance was at an end, Lady Hester and Lady Harriet de Lacy, full of Irish spirits and the excitement of the moment, took possession of a little volume of manuscript music belonging to Lady Anastasia; which they refused to return till she granted them permission to copy some Modinhas given her by one of Lady Grandison’s protégés, which were then rare in England.

After a prolonged dispute and playful defiance, the two girls, who were as at home in the house, fled from her pursuit not only through the suite of drawing-rooms, but across the hall and up the grand staircase, with the intention of taking refuge in the school-room of Selina; who, attracted to the corridor by the noise, beheld Lady Anastasia open in succession the doors of the various rooms, in search of the fugitives.

The little girl’s breath came short, as she saw her approach the last chamber in the gallery; for it was one held so sacred in the castle, that, though left open like the rest, no one ever crossed the threshold. The hand of the intruder was already on the lock,—when Selina darted forward to intercept her.

“No, no,—not *there*!—You must not enter *there*!—said she; on which Lady Anastasia, concluding from her incoherency and heightened colour that her young friends were concealed within, instantly burst into the room.

They were not there!—*Nothing* was there, but the autumnal sunshine, streaming in upon the silence and chintz hangings of an uninhabited bed-room. How, therefore, was Lady Anastasia to affix a meaning to the deathlike paleness and dilated eyes with which the dumb-stricken girl beheld her pursue her search behind the furniture and bed-curtains?—How was she to conjecture that the bed had never been approached by Selina, save with blessings on her lips and tears in her eyes;—that the poor child ever beheld there the shrouded form she had once seen extended on its sheet, —or the dying looks once fixed from that deserted pillow so fondly, so wistfully on her own!—

The laughter of the De Lacy girls resounded from an adjoining chamber; to which Lady Anastasia, breathless with the haste of her pursuit, replied by a cry of joyous exultation;—and the unwonted sound of merriment in that sacred silent spot, almost distracted the little girl.

“My poor, poor mother!”—burst from her quivering lips,—as she sank, half fainting into a chair.

On discovering the offence she had inadvertently committed, Lady Anastasia could not readily pardon the feelings she had so deeply wounded.—Excuses, indeed, she did not spare. But while Lady Hester and her sister rushed to Selina’s side, to fold her in their arms and mingle their tears with hers,—touched to the heart that “anything should have vexed their dear, dear Lina,” the real offender retired to her room to meditate in mortified resentment over what had occurred. She could not forgive *herself*; but it was provoking not to be able to blame Selina!—

It was not often, however, that occurrences so vexatious resulted from the intimacy between the Castle and the Hall. Seldom a day passed, without a meeting between some portion or other of the two families;—always pleasant parties going on,—always projects for the future.—To De Bayhurst, all this would have appeared the result of the views of Henry Askham on Lady Emilia de Lacy, and the attachment of Lord Delvyn to Sophia Askham, of which rumours had reached him in town; but that, on occasion of his visit to Edenbourne church, under the auspices of William Scotney, (who knowing him from a boy as a country neighbour, was on a more intimate footing with him than with his new patron,) he received a hint that, whatever might be the affection of the Tory Fabius for Lady Emilia, the elder brother was the happy man!—Such was the servants’ hall version of the business, which, through the gossip of the market-place, had reached the rectory; and the report taken on trust by young Scotney, was readily accepted by Sir Hugh.

On acquainting Lady Anastasia that their friend Mr. Askham was likely to form a second marriage, she so earnestly confirmed the probability of the match, that it was clear she knew better! Not

clear, indeed, to her husband ; who conceiving her intelligence to be derived from the De Lacy girls, was too eager to give it credit, to note the prevarications of her story. It was so satisfactory, while rambling with his little niece through the beautiful home park which he had ascertained to have been the favourite haunt of Evelyn, every step of which the child rendered sacred by some anecdote of her mother,—to know that such reminiscences had no longer an interest for any member of the riding party that was pursuing its way to Carlton, or exploring the numerous ruins scattered on the lovely banks of the Eden!—It was such a triumph, that even the memory of the hateful ties uniting his brother's widow to Philip Askham, should be wholly effaced!—

Not once during his visit, however, had he found himself alone with his host. Trevor, Lesly and Mr. Lechmere of Carlton, belonged to all their shooting parties ; and on other occasions, the De Lacys, Mrs. Lechmere, or Lady Anastasia herself, prevented all hazard of a tête-à-tête. But though this accorded well with his newly-renovated antipathies, it was necessary, ere he left the castle, that they should come to an understanding on several questions of strong family interest, important to both.

Several times had De Bayhurst been on the point of broaching these subjects ; when sudden emotion choked his utterance, and rendered explanation impossible. Several times, when riding with Philip and the rest, he had attempted to draw him apart for private conversation. But the moment they were thus detached, instead of accomplishing his purpose, an insurmountable repugnance to touch on the points marking the intersection of their several destinies, suspended the words upon his lips ; and with a vacant laugh, he broke into some topic of the day, uninteresting to both.

But when at length the moment of their departure was fixed, on the day preceding, De Bayhurst, with a face as pale as ashes, followed his host into the library, on pretence of asking to see some Agricultural Reports, collected and commented on by the late Lord Askham, and incidentally referred to by Philip ; who, had he been interested in the lucidity of intellect of his guest, could scarcely have failed to notice on the present occasion the inconsistency and absurdity of the observations which betrayed his absence of mind. As it was, he was thinking only how soonest to get rid of him!—

After examining the Reports, instead of fulfilling the unexpressed wishes of Philip Askham by noticing, thanks to the old buhl clock on the chimney-piece, that the dressing-bell was about to ring, he remained nailed to the library chair in which he had taken up his position on pretence of extracting certain dates from the long undisturbed quartos placed before him ; and in order to conceal his embarrassment of countenance, kept examining his hands, to which the edges of the neglected books had imparted particles of dust,

which he flung away with studied carelessness while striking into the subject so near his heart.

For when the mighty secret was out at last,—it was nothing less than a proposal to resume the guardianship of his little niece!—

“It was a grievous pity,” he said, “to separate the two children. Now that their mother was gone, whose feelings had been conceded to in the present arrangement,—now, above all, that Mr. Askham was likely to form another connexion,—he trusted that no objection would be raised to the removal of Selina to Bayhurst Hall?”—

Philip Askham was staggered. For such a proposition, he was wholly unprepared. But, Cunning being a monster fed on mysteries, like most people having anything to conceal, he was becoming artful as he was selfish; and not only saw his advantage, but determined to retain it. The possession of Selina was the only tie uniting him with De Bayhurst; over whom, it was necessary that he should possess a hold.

To assign the legal obligations he had undertaken towards his stepdaughter at the express desire of Sir Hugh, would have been useless; for a contract mutually made, might be mutually rescinded. The only insuperable obstacle to plead, was a deathbed promise to his wife that he would not separate himself from her child.

In answer to a slight expression of surprise from his companion, (who knew him to have been in town at the moment of Evelyn’s decease,) he stated the condition to have been made in a posthumous letter. Fain would De Bayhurst have implored a sight of it. But such a request, by implying mistrust of Philip’s veracity, must have provoked a breach between them, foreign to his intentions.

Defeated in his proposal by a courteous but steady refusal, on grounds it was impossible to impeach, Sir Hugh resolved to take patience. When the second marriage of Askham was accomplished, the bridegroom would perhaps become more amenable; and though he could not now persist, he would not despair. A more urgent interest at present occupied his thoughts.

“Now that we have been forced,” said he, after resigning himself to Philip’s determination, “into the consideration of a subject equally painful to both,—in order to avoid its renewal, let me seize the opportunity to inquire whether you ever happened to hear—” (for worlds could he not at that moment have pronounced the name of Evelyn!)—“at what church,—or in what parish,—was solemnized the marriage of my late brother?”

Without a moment’s pause, it was easy to answer in the negative. Such a subject was never likely to be *directly* discussed between him and his wife. But even collaterally, no mention could he recall to mind. In order however to impress him with the urgency of the inquiry, De Bayhurst saw fit to explain his motives.

“On obtaining the sign manual to the patent extending to my nephew our family change of name,” said he, “I was required to furnish the Herald’s Office with the marriage certificates of his parents, and one of his baptism. —The latter, it was easy to procure; for I knew him to have been born in the house where my poor brother breathed his last; and with it, the officials were fortunately content. For of the marriage, no tidings could I obtain!—With yourself, still overwhelmed with the grief of your recent bereavement, I could not then venture to communicate on such a subject. But since on various future occasions such a document must be forthcoming, your interest in the fortunes of Edward will, I am sure, induce you to overlook my breach of delicacy.—In a word, *can* you assist me?”

“I fear not,—I *greatly* fear not!” replied Philip, with equal readiness. “There is an old servant in this house, who was formerly attached to the Monson family. But I have reason to know that she was not privy to the marriage. She did not rejoin her mistress till within a few days of Selina’s birth.”

“Most unfortunate!” ejaculated Sir Hugh, sinking back into his chair. “Lord Llandore, the heir to the Bayhurst property, in the event of my brother dying without legitimate issue, is a man from whom my nephew would experience the utmost difficulty, in the event of any informality in his title. I am, therefore, most anxious that, during my lifetime, everything should be plain beyond dispute.”

“Set your mind at ease, then!” cried Philip, with sudden recollection. “All is, I hope, secure. Among the papers of my lamented wife, I remember once seeing,—it was on the occasion of,—it was—no matter!—an envelope, I say, passed through my hands endorsed as containing her marriage certificate, and the certificates of baptism of the children.”

“And these are still in your possession?”—demanded Sir Hugh, with renovated eagerness, starting forward in his chair.

“I can scarcely say in my possession; for a sealed packet was bequeathed by Mrs. Askham to Selina, containing her family papers, with express injunctions that it should not be opened till she attained the age of fourteen,—of which nearly a year is wanting.”

“How unlucky!—Still, you are certain that the certificate is contained in the sealed packet?”

“As certain as it is possible to be, without ocular demonstration. For the desk formerly containing the papers, was given to the little girl at once, with a few family trinkets; and among them, there was not a vestige of paper or writing.”

“And in whose custody has the more important packet remained?”—demanded the baronet. And it was a comfort to Philip Askham that he was not forced to answer,—“in mine?”

“I placed it,” said he, with some assumption of dignity, “in the

hands of Mr. Moran, the solicitor selected by the children's mother to be trustee of the marriage settlement that secured them her little fortune."

"In that case," cried Sir Hugh, greatly relieved, "I have no further uneasiness. All I entreat is that, when the time arrives for opening the packet, you will impress on my little niece the great importance of the document; and she will perhaps deposit it in my keeping,—or at all events, afford the information necessary to obtain a copy."

There was no difficulty in promising this in the name of Selina; to whom her brother's interests were dearer than her own. But while Philip was satisfying the mind of Sir Hugh by fresh assurances, the clang of the dressing-bell luckily drowned his words, and broke up the conference.—It was a relief to both that so good an excuse was afforded for its abrupt termination.

CHAPTER XXVII.

—Le bien et le mal, mêlés et confondus,
S'offrent de toutes parts à mes yeux éperdus!
Inhabile à sonder ce chaos adultère,
Sans voix pour le nier,—irrité de le taire,—
De l'ombre à la clarté las de flotter ainsi,
Au démon de l'orgueil j'ai demandé merci.

LA CAUSSADE.

—Alisquæ et idem
Nascaris—

HORACE.

"Did you ever see a fellow in such prodigious feather as Askham?" said Sir Walter Lesly to Trevor,—soon after Philip's instalment in town, the following spring. "He is coming out stronger and stronger!"—

"There was always the making of *something* in him,"—languidly replied the dandy, as he sat skimming the morning papers at Watier's. "In proper training he might have become one of *us*!—*Mais que voulez-vous?* By marrying at five-and twenty, Askham stifled himself in a wet blanket!"—

"Rather, in a sheet of lead!" retorted Lesly.—"*Felo de se*, without extenuating circumstances!—A match that positively did *nothing* for him,—except bury him up to the ears in respectability."

"Do you remember," said Trevor, without withdrawing his eyes from the advertisements of the Morning Post,—“those dreadful four days he once decoyed us into spending with him, at the time he used to trot to covert on one of his wife's coach-horses; and kept a

beast of a cook, who nearly poisoned us by serving up a *salmi de bécasses, au blanc*?"

"To be sure I do!—A fortnight at Middlemore's did not get the taste of his domestic felicity out of my mouth!"—said Lesly, extending himself in a lounging chair.

"As far as *cuisine* goes, Lunardelli, whom I recommended to him, (*et pour cause*,) and with whom Yarmouth took immense pains when he was *sous-chef* at Hertford House,—soon set matters to rights. The *croûtons giboyés* they gave me last autumn at Eden, were something sublime!"

"Even now, however, one can't say much for his stables!" rejoined Lesly.—"Yet I shouldn't be surprised if those hunters of his fetched from sixteen to eighteen hundred guineas, if brought up to Tattersalls,—including of course Black Muley, for whom he refused three hundred and fifty from Middlemore."

"I wonder what put Askham into such preposterous spirits last night at Grandison House?" observed Trevor,—"for the division had gone hard against them!—Byron would have it that De Bayhurst had gained a prize in the lottery,—all things being now in common between them!"

"Byron cannot stand Philip Askham!—Byron swears that if he had been shut up, like Ugolino, in the tower of Famine, he would not only have eaten his children, but picked their bones."

"*Entre nous*, the Childe had a prodigious mind to fall in love with Lady Anastasia himself,—by way of antithesis, I suppose, to his gazelle-eyed Leila!—And De Bayhurst would certainly have topped his part in Hassan!—Conceive him in a mountain-pass of the South Downs, with a troop of his Sussex dragoons,—giaour-hunting!—

Stern Bayhurst hath a journey ta'en,
With twenty yeomen in his train,—
Each armed as best becomes a man,
With beef in pouch, and beer in cann;
The captain first, armed for the levee,
Trailing a sabre, hot and heavy,—
Stain'd with——"

"Hush, hush!" interrupted Sir Walter Lesly. "Yonder sits that young donkey, Hinton Hort, all ears and bray; and it is more sure he will circulate your parody, than that De Bayhurst would appoint you his laureat."

"Who cares *what* a man likes, whom *no one* likes?" said Trevor, shrugging his shoulders.

"I do, for one,—that is, for *number one*;—when he happens to have such hock in his cellar and shooting on his estates as De Bayhurst.—Remember, too, that first sulky fit of his kept us three years out of our property;—for I take it that providence created country baronets expressly to find venison and claret for young ravens like you and I!"

“So long as Askham goes it at his present rate, young ravens and old can dispense with De Bayhurst!”—rejoined Horace Trevor. “I should be sorry to cover Askham’s present expenditure with ten thousand a year! Depend upon it Lunardelli does not let him off under three, — for his dinners are incomparably the best in London.”

“I don’t suppose it falls on *him* to keep up the borough?”—rejoined Sir Walter. “Do you know what they allow him for dry-nursing the Askham estates?”—

“Something considerable. But like Van, the omnipotent of the exchequer, he has it all his own way!—Issue of bills unlimited!—And in the late lord’s time the property passed for one of the finest in the kingdom. Don’t you remember at Eton, how Cis Danby used to pit Percy Askham against Middlemore, to see which of the cousins would brag loudest about the list of killed and wounded in his preserves?”—

“I suppose Askham feels pretty sure of it all for his boy?” said Lesly. “According to Middlemore’s account, the Frenchwoman who got hold of Percy on his arrival at Verdun, (actress,—*chanteuse*,—*danseuse*,—or worse,) will take care never to let him marry!”

“His own wits will take care never to let him marry,” retorted Trevor. “He was always a deuced deal sharper than Philip.”

“Do you dine in Brook Street to-day?” inquired Lesly, drily.

“No! I was obliged to put him off.”

“A command from Carlton House?”

Trevor nodded assent. “They are glad to get one there just now as often as they can,” said he, with an *air accablé*; “for there is not as much French in the whole household as will afford *oui* or *non* to Madame Lieven’s *interrogatoire à perpétuité*! How they will make it out with the De Staels, is ‘a thing to dream of not to tell.’”

“Last night at Grandison House, some one protested that Corinne arrived here with the most flagitious intentions against the Regent!” said Lesly, laughing.—“What a Psyche for what a Cupid!”—

“Another of Byron’s hoaxes!—But here he comes!”—continued he, as the handsome poet limped into the adjoining room, and threw himself without noticing them, on the sofa. “Couldn’t one swear, from his *mauvaise honte*, that he had just been perpetrating a chef-d’œuvre?”

“In my opinion there is as much vanity in *his* laying his roc’s-eggs without a cackle, as in Petrel’s crowing like chanticleer over his wren’s nest!”—rejoined Trevor. “I hope they won’t spoil him at Holland House. Byron is too good a fellow to be bound in blue and yellow. ’Tis a fine thing to be a popular poet, if but to enable one to show one’s conviction that it is a finer thing to be a man of the world!—I should like to have written that thing with

the Turkish name, if only to give a new vogue to my mixtures at Pontet's and Delcroix's!"

It was just the moment when the Dandies were beginning to out-dandy themselves,—from fear of being distanced in impertinence by the Exclusives; a new power recently arisen in the world of fashion.

And in the present age, new powers are not to be despised. The nineteenth century has seen more than Jonah's gourd start up in a night, to vie with the veterans of the forest. The nineteenth century, which has witnessed the Minervalike engenderment of the South American republics, and re-substantiation of the kingdoms of Leopold and Otho out of the spectres of ancient Greece and Belgic Gaul, has also beheld the sudden growth of dynasties, whose reticulation overspread the face of Europe with its toils ere cognizant of their existence:—the Bonapartes, for instance, emerging ready-crowned, like Banquo's issue, from the office of a Corsican attorney; and the Rothschilds, upstarting ready *thalered*, from a squalid compting-house of the Frankfort Juden Gasse!—

The former, indeed, have returned as dust to dust, and are no more seen! But the dust of the latter being gold-dust, they have substantiated their bullion thrones in the various capitals of Europe; and, like Constance, bidden "kings come and bow to them:"—and kings have done as they were bid, and become, like Lancelot Gobbo, servitors to the rich Jew!—

Having little (with two fair exceptions) to recommend them, beyond the power possessed by the long-eared Midas, of converting all they touch to gold, and the excellent tact of sparing a handful of their golden grain for the furrow of fashionable hospitality to bring forth golden harvests a thousand fold,—the enfeoffed children of Israel, who seize as waifs and strays of the golden calf every splendid mansion or beautiful villa left abandoned by some aristocratic wreck, and who reverence on their knees, as a badge of chivalry or when sparkling with brilliants, the cross on which elsewhere they spit their scorn,—are in fact at this moment twice as potent, and maintain a far more ramified influence in society, than the much-denounced Congregation of Loyola, whom the pages of Eugene Sue have recently held up *in terrorem*. For if the Jesuits were the confessors of half the kings in Europe, be it remembered that the Rothschilds are their bankers; and should ever the Holy Roman empire be reconstructed, the chances are a thousand to one (we were about to write fifty per cent.) that Duke Rothschild I. will obtain a vote in the Diet!—

Under the auspices of a rival power, somewhat secondary to these vicegerents of Mammon, the season of 1813, meanwhile, was advancing in brilliant ovation. The dawn of a new order of things was perceptible.—*Le commencement de la fin commençait à poindre*. The French armies had retreated from Russia in disorder; and, thanks to Russia, disorder was making notable progress at home.

For so long as the English remain isolated from continental infection by the *cordon sanitaire* of their white cliffs and immaculate virtues, the proprieties engrafted on our original crabstock in the days of the Puritans, continue to put forth new shoots, and create a wholesome shade throughout the land. But the moment the re-opening of the ports enables foreign trappers to find sport in our hunting grounds, loud rings the axe and down goes *la forêt des préjugés*,—leaving, like all hasty clearances, the stumps of our stemless virtues protruding from the soil, to render it unavailable for lighter produce.—

And already, a vast portion of the continent had renewed with us the reciprocation of human exports. Our new ally, Russia was hugging the Prince Regent to its bosom, as became its ursinine interests. Suits of sable were now our only wear,—and caviar our daily bread.—Every day brought over droves of Russian bears,—Kalmuck crossed with Parisian;—a hybrid breed, engendered by the passion of Catherine and her grandson for bedaubing with French polish their Russian deals. For the *rocaille* Parisianism of *petits-mâîtres* and *petites-mâîtresses* having emigrated with the Bourbons to Mittau, and never returned, the aristocracies of St. Petersburg and Warsaw exhibited, at that moment, a far closer imitation of the manners of the *ancien régime*, than the republicanized *salons* of imperial France.—

From St. Petersburg, therefore, (by much such a circumbendibus as if we were to re-imbibe from New England in the nineteenth century, the customs which the pilgrim fathers conveyed from Old England in the seventeenth,) the west of Europe received back, with the order of St. Andrew and St. George, the fastidious fribbledom of the days of red heels and *maréchale* powder, and the Madame de Pompadour-ism of Versailles.—

The world of fashion,—(a supplemental quarter of the modern earth,)—being submitted just then, like all other quarters, to Tory ascendancy, had unluckily fallen a victim to the policy of the Tories. For what more probable than that the admonitory system which induced the Spartans to exhibit drunken Helots to their offspring by way of warning against inebriation, suggested the advantage of nailing up, like a kite or weasel, the consular government of the Exclusives, that its odium might advance the cause of absolute monarchy?—

In the majestic triumvirate, was included Lady Grandison! With the same astucious policy which induced the Emperor Alexander to extend in amity to Napoleon the hand originally too feeble to repel him from his frontier, she had entered into a league, offensive and defensive, with the new Russian ambassadress; who treated London as Malibran used to treat provincial theatres,—causing the dresses and decorations to be burnt, and the company to be put into training, ere she would so much as condescend to rehearse.

Reared in the rarified atmosphere of diplomacy, and forming a species of golden telegraph for the secret service of the Muscovite cabinet, the nimble-witted Countess conceived herself to be a century in advance of those she had undertaken to civilize. But while forbearingly accepting Antony and Lepidus for colleagues till able to stand alone in her new government, she retained for herself the *toga palmata* and *scipio eburneus* of Western Empire,—warring with the East by the hands of one fair triumvir, and enforcing her lists of proscription by those of the third;—while the slavish patricians of London voluntarily enlisted as lictors, to support the dignity of her ivory chair!—Among the first acts of her consulate, by the way, may be enumerated the comprehension of Harley Street within the liberties of fashion!—

“Lady Grandison is a cleverer woman than I took her for, Emma!”—said Lord Hardyng, one day to his wife, who retained her appropriate position in the *beau monde*, without assuming its livery, or forfeiting the better attributes of her nature more than the waters of the Rhone their purity by transit through the lake of Constance.—“Instead of resigning herself to be one of the three heads of Cerberus, I thought nothing less would content her than to have all the bark to herself. I was afraid we were going to have a Grandison faction. Like the poor Princess of Wales, who, after compelling the first men in the land to throw up her cause, lends her name as a war-cry to the city malcontents, (as some duchess’s court petticoat scours the streets as the paraphernalia of a May-day queen,) I expected my old friend to exhibit a signal downfall!”

“Instead of which, Grandison House has been twice as pleasant since the honours of fashion were divided!”

“The only danger is lest it become *too* pleasant!”—resumed Lord Hardyng. “I do not pretend to be more primitive than my neighbours; for I have heard the chimes at midnight like other men—But rather than see the *cavaliere servente* system established in England, let us remain till doomsday the heinous savages we are stated to have been, before this new winnowing machine of Almack’s was set up!—At Carlton House, evil example is of less moment, the circle being of so limited and peculiar a nature. But from the influence of Grandison House, the very Portico or Academus of good manners, which whenever popularity is in request, stretches its hospitalities to its five hundred guests like other mansions less fastidious,—the amount of mischief is incalculable!”

“Waste no arithmetic on it then, but let the world take care of itself!” replied Emma. “*Our* sympathy would profit it as little, I fear, as that of the couple in ancient times, who wept themselves to death over its iniquities. The only person who causes *me* uneasiness, is Philip!”

“By Philip, *s’entend*, of course, Lady Anastasia;—since *they* are becoming one and indivisible!”—

“And supposing others were to make the same ill-natured remark?”—

“I stand corrected. Nay, I heartily wish, dear Emma, I had anything civiler to say about them,” rejoined Lord Hardyng, good-humouredly, “for, but for *them*, I should run some risk of becoming a fatalist!—The chance that drove my phaeton past Up-pingham House in the nick of time to catch a glimpse of the only woman on earth who would have suited me as a wife,—the better half of my Androgynes,—ought certainly to have made *them* understand each other in time to become one flesh. As it is, I fear, (as Joseph Surface does,) ‘that they are giving that worthy man the baronet much uneasiness!’”

“*There* you are luckily mistaken!” cried Emma,—“for I have watched them all narrowly. A month ago, I received a charming letter from your uncle Scotney, imploring my interposition in behalf of Lady Anastasia, as a stray lamb of his flock; and describing with deep feeling the disadvantages with which she had contended in early life, and her subsequent aspirings after excellence.”

“And was my poor dear Dr. Primrose of an uncle, simple-hearted enough to fancy Philip Askham the man to be remonstrated with, on such a subject, by his younger sister?”

“More patiently, perhaps, than by an elder friend. But without direct interference, good is sometimes effected. In most cases of this nature, mere imprudence causes a woman to be slighted, who, when smarting under the slight, becomes *more* than imprudent; and it would be hard indeed if Margaret, Susan, and myself united, could do nothing to avert, in the present instance, the Lilliputian pin’s pricks of the scandal-mongers. Such has been our motive for going out this season twenty times more than usual, or than we desire; that people may perceive Lady Anastasia to be as intimate with the whole Askham family as with Philip.”

“Excellent! intended, dearest Emma!” cried her husband. “But believe me, you might as well attempt to arrest the conflagration of a varnish manufactory once in flames, as the progress of scan. mag.!”

“So we accustom ourselves to say; and the poor manufactory is left to blaze!—But for Philip’s sake,—for Anastasia’s,—and, above all for that of little Selina,—let us set all our engines to work!”

“You omitted, however, in enumerating the family forces, to name the most influential Askham of you all!”

“Henry?”—

“Rather his fair bride—Lady Isabella! If Emilia de Lacy had married him, (instead of setting her heart, as they pretend, on his graceless elder brother,) I should have left him out of the question. But the Duke of Norcliffe’s sister is worth her weight in tracts!—The certificate of any one of her mother’s daughters might suffice for a silk apron or lawn sleeves! Never was rigid righteousness so

superrigid; straining, not only at a gnat, but a midge, or a mote in the sunbeam.—Since Henry's marriage, I take off my hat to him if I see him at half a street's distance! I look upon the Honourable Henry Askham as semi-canonized. If the Irish secretary, young Peel, were only out of his light, I would venture a pony on Henry's becoming prime minister, with a new edition of Protestantism flourishing under his patronage, in the reign of Princess Charlotte's son."

"Henry was a lucky man, however, to obtain such a wife as Lady Isabella," replied Emma, more gravely. "Admit that it implies some compliment to the merits of a poor younger brother, to be chosen by a duke's daughter, with excellent principles and a fortune of fifty thousand pounds!"

"Principles and interest, eh?—But if you were to say a *hundred* thousand, you would be within the mark; since for every guinea she brings, she will save another!"—retorted Lord Hardyng.

Sure such a pair were never seen,—
So sparing in their thrifty nature!"

"Thrifty perhaps,—but let us be thankful that one Askham, at least, is safe from the workhouse!" remonstrated Emma. "Two spendthrifts in the family are enough; and Percy and Philip are burning the old Yule clog at both ends, and in the middle!"

"They must get Henry to pay their debts for them;—though I doubt whether the sight of all his family in rags, would extract a maravedi from his *cher magot*. I never saw a fellow more bent on securing something to live upon after his death!"—

"I certainly *would* engage the good offices of Lady Isabella," resumed Emma,—more occupied with the delinquencies of her second brother than the foibles of the third,—"but that I am afraid of giving her a hint likely to alarm the prudery of the Norcliffe family. Every day, they hold a sort of privy council, at one or other of their houses, about what is or is no proper to be done; and if once their *collet monté* set were to set up its quills at Lady Anastasia, the evil would be irreparable!—Yet, in my opinion, the Christian injunction, 'Let him who is without sin among you cast a stone at her,' implied plenary absolution,—since those guiltless themselves, would refrain as an act of mercy!"

"I am afraid poor Lady Isabella has scarcely courage to be merciful! However, the Norcliffes, like most of our best families, hang together like a bunch of grapes; and the Duke being so dear a friend of Lady Grandison and her daughter, through *him*, she might be persuaded to assist in patching up the character of poor Stasy."

"You mistake me.—It is not her *character* I want to save,—it is *herself*!" cried Emma, more earnestly. "I consider her shamefully sacrificed by my brother!—For the diversion of an idle hour, he won her girlish affections—only to desert her;—and having

again idle hours upon his hands, has again—but let us talk no more of it,—for even to think on the subject, makes me forget he is my brother!”

While the family of Philip Askham were thus solicitous on his account, the world, of course, pronounced him a very happy man! The moral excitement indicating, in *his* nature, as in Lady Anastasia's, an indigestion of conscience, passed in society for, “charming spirits;” and he was thought a much pleasanter fellow now that, being five thousand pounds in debt and full fathom five in love with a married woman, he exhibited all the reckless flightiness of an uneasy mind, than when enjoying the serene equability of pulse symptomatic of the frigid zone of Eden Castle.

“I cannot think what Askham and Lady Emilia are about!” said Sir Hugh de Bayhurst to his wife, (all anxiety for the completion of the match so long prognosticated, that he might renew his propositions concerning the niece to whom he was becoming daily more attached, and whom he longed to emancipate from the name of Saville, and the nursery associations of Philip Askham's household.) —“Lady Lynchmore, I am afraid, opposes the match?—She has, perhaps, other views for her daughter?”

“Not that I am aware of,”—was Lady Anastasia's evasive answer, bending closer over her embroidery frame, to screen her guilty blushes from observation.

“You should invite them here together oftener,” resumed her husband; “and Lady Lynchmore might possibly be glad to let Lady Emilia accompany you sometimes to the opera, now her second daughter is out,—when Askham would see her unmolested.—I have the accomplishment of the marriage sincerely at heart; and you would greatly oblige me by doing your utmost for its promotion.”

Sad encouragement this, to one who needed none, to have Philip Askham constantly by her side, on pretension of encouraging his attentions to another!—For so demoralizing are the lessons of a world where

On commence par être dupe, et finit par être fripon,

that the woman who had suffered so cruelly from the result of unmeaning assiduities, did not hesitate to suggest them in a quarter where, for anything she knew to the contrary, they might bring forth fruit equally pernicious.

So far, therefore, from entertaining the misgivings ascribed to him by Trevor and Lesly and half the idlers of Watier's, never had De Bayhurst felt more gratified by the conduct of his wife, than at a moment when, in deference to his wishes, Askham was their constant guest; and, in deference to his predilections, Selina their all but inmate.

Day after day, the little girl, (to whom that name is now scarcely appropriate, her stature already exceeding that of her friend

Sophia,) was made the unconscious medium of communication between her stepfather and the wife of her uncle. Lady Anastasia, having cultivated her sole accomplishment till she had become one of the best amateur singers of the day, had undertaken the tuition of Selina,—delighted to afford instruction to a pupil so gifted;—and every morning after breakfast, Miss Saville repaired to Grosvenor Square for a lesson; little imagining, as she entered the gorgeous dressing-room which contained their practising piano, that the apparently unimportant message entrusted to her by Philip, was to regulate for the day the movements of her uncle's house.

The only thing that *did* excite her surprise, was the number of times she discovered Lady Anastasia either in tears, or with eyes that denoted recent weeping!—What could *she* have to grieve for?—she, who possessed all the joys and comforts of this world;—a surviving mother, whom she saw daily,—a husband who gratified her utmost caprices,—friends, beyond the computation of even her porter's book;—and luxuries such as the imagination of childhood had never dreamed!

Schooled, indeed, by the chaste simplicity of her mother to tastes of a purer kind, Selina was dazzled rather than delighted with the splendours which, in order in the first instance to defy the competition of Grandison House, De Bayhurst had lavished upon his wife.—She admired the beautiful conservatory, always filled with the choicest exotics, opening from the dressing-room; she envied the simple bath-room beyond. But the toilet, with its dressing-boxes and mirror frame of chased gold enriched with turquoises, and its cover and courtine of old point, appeared to *her* an unseemly parade,—a deification of that whose worship is unholy. A sculptured *bahut* of ebony encrusted with ivory, and the rich caskets of silver medallioned with coral,—of tortoiseshell, agate, or mother of pearl, that adorned the beautiful consoles of *pietra dura*, would have been more in place, she thought, in the drawing-room suite. For to Selina, there was something selfish in this lavish decoration of a chamber appropriated to the solitary enjoyment of its mistress.

Since those days, the luxury of private life has advanced with gigantic strides; and houses and households at that time rare, even in the highest class, are now common in the third or fourth, or wherever riches abound. For during a peace of thirty years' duration, money must be invested in superfluities, or lie like overhoused grain in mildewed heaps; and to this minor evil, even Philosophy may reconcile herself, by reflecting on the important public works effected under the same dispensation; and above all, on the melioration beginning to effect itself in the condition of the lower orders;—slowly indeed, but surely; *more* surely than by the prompt operation of a revolution, which is often as promptly effaced.—For the advantages obtained step by step by the poor, are never aban-

doned. They experience too much difficulty in fighting their way to a privilege, to recede a single inch; as in the Batavian provinces, the territory so laboriously redeemed from the sea, will admit of no encroachment!

Sometimes, when Lady Anastasia was in a more cheerful mood, Selina, encouraged by her kindness, *almost* took courage to inquire the cause of the tears which so often excited her surprise.—But the long-anticipated epoch of her fourteenth birthday was at hand; and she fancied that, after the period tacitly assigned by her mother for her attainment of years of discretion, she might accost with a better grace, on a subject of this delicate nature, the indulgent wife of her uncle.

Previous, however, to that happy birthday, a great national triumph was destined to throw all private interests into the shade. Triumphant as had been, for some time past, the career of the Marquis of Wellington, our overweening national vanity was becoming somewhat jealous of the series of successes by which the Allied armies were gradually driving back the French to their national frontiers; when lo! the battle of Vittoria put new life into our veins, and restored the peacock's feathers to our plundered tail!—

Never was joy more universal!—From John of Groat's house to the Land's end, the country crowed and clapped its wings.—A public fête was organised in celebration of the national triumph; and to that date may be retraced the recognition throughout Europe of the name of WELLINGTON, as that of the greatest soldier of modern times.

Above all, the Regent was in his glory. England had now done more than her share in advancing the great cause for which the Holy Alliance was consolidated. The Lion's fang had struck deeper than the Eagle's beak!—It was possible,—(even the most croaking of country gentlemen henceforward admitted it to be *possible*,)—that the combined forces of Europe, advancing upon France on every side, might end in crushing, by their stringent circumvallation, the audacious land which had so long held them at bay;—Lord Wellington being, of course, chief engineer of the triumph,—although, like poor Percy, he had to go round by Toulouse!—

The triumph of the Tories, therefore, was complete: *too* complete to leave even the weakest of them inclination to assert it. And if Henry Askham wore his laurels with decency, how much more those who, like Lord Uppingham, had foreseen and prepared from afar with perspicacious statesmanship, the glory now shed upon their cause!—The Marchioness, who had shared his uneasy moments in the onset of her married life, could scarcely restrain her joy on witnessing the success of measures, his share in the dictation of which no one so fully appreciated as herself. She knew that he had been thanked by the Regent with all the warmth of private friendship; but sometimes, with a woman's weakness,

thought it hard that the name she bore had not the share it merited in the bruitings of the newsmen's horns.

Some such excitement was wanting, indeed, to divert her attention from the increasing uneasiness produced by the revelations of her sisters, concerning the proceedings of Philip. From words indiscreetly let fall by Lord Middlemore, they discovered that his close alliance with Grandison House, by inaugurating him into the Jockey set, had introduced him, if not to the Turf, to its immediate confines;—and his losses on the recent Derby, in backing the field against Smolensko, were quoted as amounting to many thousands!—

“So that he now adds gambling to his other virtues!” observed Lady Hardyng, —with indignation, when Lady Middlemore ventured the communication.

“Don't call it gambling, dear Emma!” cried Susan, with heightened colour. “I never heard *betting* called gambling. Middlemore *always* bets.—But with *his* fortune and unequalled knowledge of horses, it is certainly allowable!”

“*That* point, I will not dispute with *you*, Susy!” replied her sister.—“But in the case of Philip, who bets with the money of another, the case is clearly indefensible!”

“And as Lord Uppingham informs me that it is impossible but that France must shortly sue for an ignominious peace,” interposed Margaret, “poor dear Percy's release is certain;—and, before the lapse of another year, Philip will be required to give up his accounts!—I dare not repeat, however, all that Henry has insinuated to me on that subject!”

“What need of *insinuations*!” cried Emma, with spirit.—“Is not the truth plain enough, and bad enough?—Philip is receiving five thousand a year for a duty he only half accomplishes; and spending ten,—which he accomplishes only too well.”

“Surely Lord Hardyng might remonstrate with him!” said Susan earnestly.—“Philip had always most confidence in *him*.—Lord Uppingham is too much his senior;—and as a cousin, Middlemore can be silenced without ceremony.”

“Do not suppose my husband has waited till now!” rejoined Lady Hardyng, with feeling. “He has, in fact, interfered so often, and said so much, that I am never certain from day to day, whether Philip will ever speak to us again.”

On one point, meanwhile, the amiable sisters were unanimous; to unite in protection of the lovely girl from whom their brother's attention was now so thoroughly withdrawn. Three years must elapse previous to Selina's introduction into society. But they appreciated the value of years so important to the formation of the female character; and decided that she must not be left to the charge of servants, or wholly to that of Mrs. Markham.—

It happened that Philip Askham, as well as Lords Grandison and

Middlemore, was nominated among the stewards of the public fête about to be given in honour of the battle of Vittoria. Already the Regent had commemorated the national triumph at Carlton House, by an entertainment rivalling in lustre the celebrated one formerly described; and be it some evidence of the change of manners effected during the ten years comprized within the limits of our tale, that these festivities, occurring at the close of July, comprehended the whole mass of English nobility, at first described as rushing out of town in the commencement of June!—The fashionable calendar might therefore have computed its dates by an Old style or New, with as much reason as the Gregorian.

Among those most active in supporting the Vittoria fête, and most resolved that its brilliancy should do honour to the Tory banner, was the resless *intrigante* of Grandison House. She had bespoken the august presence of the Dandies;—she had ensured the golden patronage of the Exclusives;—and to *her* it consequently appeared of minor moment, that six Princes of the blood, of various politics yet congruent in patriotic ardour, had promised to officiate at the dinner.—But among the minor points which her caprice had pledged itself to accomplish, was that Selina should join with Lady Anastasia the large and brilliant party of what the Morning Post calls “leaders of the ton,”—which she had organized with the express view of an *entrée* calculated to produce a sensation.

At her intercession, the sanction of Philip was readily obtained.—The occasion was exceptional.—Many younger daughters of the nobility, of Miss Saville’s age, were to be present at the first national fête which had taken place in London since the peace of Amiens;—and the only difficulty that remained to be surmounted was with Selina.—Not from any pretence of premature wisdom, suggesting that she was too young for such a scene; for the pleasure of accompanying her friend Sophia and the De Lacys, would have sufficed at any other moment to render the evening delightful, even had not her girlish curiosity been as much excited as the occasion deserved.

But it was the eve of her birthday,—the birthday so long consecrated both to her heart and imagination, as fixing, by her mother’s will, her childhood’s term. Thenceforward, she was to be a reasonable,—thenceforward an accountable being; or why should that best of mothers have determined that the family papers were for the future to be entrusted to her care? For months past, indeed, she had thought of nothing else. That fixed idea had distracted her mind, not only from her studies, but her natural rest; or when the long-protracted sleep at length sealed her eyelids, predominated in her dreams. Even in her prayers, she had supplicated for wisdom to fulfil with better grace the wishes of the dead, which were about to be made known by the long silent voice of her mother.

On the eve of such a day, therefore, to mingle with a wild, tu-

multuous, pleasure-seeking throng, seemed little less than sacrilege.—She did not wish to have her thoughts disturbed from the duties, which, on that occasion, were to reconnect her as by a renovated tie, with the precious mother she had lost.

Useless, however, to remonstrate!—Mr. Askham had decided that she was to go; and to explain to *him* the motives of her reluctance, was impossible. So completely had he forgotten his poor wife, as to render recurrence to her an offence; and when Selina ventured to raise a slight objection to the scheme, he became so incensed, and taxed her so harshly with ingratitude to those who loaded her with gratuitous kindness,—her friends,—*her benefactors*,—that, unwilling to renew by her perseverance his indelicate reproaches, she swallowed her tears in silence, and obeyed.

When the morning came that promised to so many hundreds a day of joy, a letter was placed in her hands by Mrs. Markham, which, though in her uncle's handwriting, she hesitated to open,—for it was addressed to “Miss de Bayhurst!”

“Read it, my dear child!” said the good governess with a smile of gratulation. “It is intended only for yourself.”

“I had reserved for to-morrow, my dearest niece,” wrote Sir Hugh, “the gratification of addressing you by a name now legally your own, which will serve to interpret in the world your relationship to those to whom, under any appellation, you are so dear. But as the announcement was to have been accompanied on your birthday by a little gift which it would afford me peculiar pleasure that you should wear to-night, I anticipate by a few hours the satisfaction of begging your acceptance of a trifle that may remind you, I trust, for many happy years to come, of the occasion of its bestowal; as well as of the sincere wishes for your welfare of

“Your affectionate uncle,

“H. DE BAYHURST.”

So deadly a faintness prevented Selina from extending her hand to receive the morocco case which awaited her in those of Mrs. Markham, that, instead of her birthday present, the good woman hastened to offer her a glass of water.

“And *must* I give up the name of Saville?” said she,—tears falling from her eyes at the idea of renouncing what seemed to connect her with the sacred memory of her parents. “Surely I ought to have been consulted before measures were taken!”—

Mrs. Markham, with the feeling of superiority becoming their relative position, smiled in spite of her pupil's tears, at the idea of her being “consulted” about what appeared to *her* a mere question of law; and instead of encouraging her repinings, called upon her to be grateful for a simple but magnificent string of pearls, not exactly like those of the fairy tale “each as big as a hazel-nut,”

—but large enough to be almost out of proportion with the slender white throat of Selina. It was as Mrs. Markham remarked, —“a necklace for a queen.”

To the necklace, therefore, in her affectionate reply to her uncle, she limited her acknowledgments. She could say, with truth, that she was grateful. She could say, with truth, that it was beautiful. But when she came to the point of signing herself “Selina de Bayhurst,” twice did she lay down her pen ere she had courage to confirm the change!

When evening came, the simple dress prepared for her by Mrs. Markham had to be laid aside for one of the finest India muslin, enriched with costly Mechlin lace, which was forwarded by Madame Triaud as a present from Lady Anastasia; and the exclamations of delight of old Susan on seeing her thus arrayed, and the involuntary commendations of even the more guarded governess, established so permanent a blush on her young cheek, that on entering the saloon at Grandison House, where a large party was assembled to proceed to the privileged entrance and places reserved for the stewards of the Vittoria fête, a general murmur of surprise and admiration followed the announcement of “Lady Anastasia and Miss de Bayhurst.”

At first, it was supposed to be a mistake.—But Lady Grandison, delighting at all times to be an expounder of mysteries, explained to every one in succession, the light in which Selina was thenceforward to be regarded; and while Lady Lynchmore was lending an attentive ear to her rigmarole, Lord Delvyn profited by his mother’s preoccupation to exclaim with his usual coolness to his sisters and Sophia Askham, —“Didn’t I *tell* you my little wife would cut you all out?—Did you ever see such a complexion,—did you ever see such hair,—did you ever see such perfect beauty and grace?”—

In the confusion of proceeding to the carriages, he even contrived to enlist himself in the special service of Selina.

“The others will have the stewards to take care of them, when we arrive,” said he, in a confidential whisper to Miss de Bayhurst; —“but remember, Lina, *you* belong to *me*! I shall take care of you through the evening.”—

Terrified by the presence of the throng with which, even in their reserved places, they were intermingled, she was only too thankful for the protection of so old a friend; and not a few smiles of intelligence were exchanged in the party when Philip Askham, with the white satin bow and laurel leaf of stewardship in his button-hole, advanced, as usual, to offer his arm to Lady Anastasia; and Lord Delvyn, as *unusual*, did *not* offer his to Sophia.

If this act of desertion arose from the vanity of being seen to escort the youngest and fairest creature in that brilliant crowd, it was fully gratified. The elegance of Selina’s dress,—the gracefulness of her slender figure,—the vivid bloom of her complexion,

—attracted so much attention, that she became the theme of general curiosity. While the blaze of fireworks and illuminations rendered the brilliant scene as light as day, and the stirring music of a combination of military bands into one powerful orchestra, sent its strains into the midnight air, the beauty of that one fair, delicate girl, remained uneclipsed and undiminished.

“Daughter of poor Ned Saville of the Guards?” exclaimed the Duke of York, when Lady Grandison, who was parading on the arm of his Royal Highness, explained the connexion with the De Bayhursts of the beautiful girl he was admiring. “The finest young fellow in the army,—a man I loved as a brother!”—

In the unfortunate expedition to Holland, the Duke had indeed enjoyed peculiar opportunities of witnessing the valour of one who had passed away, unremembered, among the crowd of heroic aspirants whose “names are writ in water.”—And the commendations thus abruptly uttered to Lady Grandison, were repeated in the kindest and most soothing manner, when, having caused Miss De Bayhurst to be presented to him, he took her hand in his, as that of the daughter of a friend.

Poor Selina!—Whichever way she turned,—hundreds of admiring eyes were fixed upon her blushing face,—and hundreds of flattering whispers poured into her shrinking ears!

“Lovely, most lovely!—All the delicate transparency of a Greuze!” said Lord Hardyng to his wife, on first seeing in full-dress the fair creature whose expansion of beauty he had watched from early childhood.

“And better still, all the *naïveté* of Sir Joshua!”—added his wife in the same discreet whisper. And the tears that, even in that brilliant scene, arose in her eyes when she thought how fondly poor Evelyn would have prided herself on the modest beauty of her daughter, seemed responsive to those which trembled in those of poor Selina, as it occurred to her how differently,—how *very* differently,—had her own inclinations been consulted, the eve of her fourteenth birthday would have been passed!—

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Dum potuit, solita gemitum virtute repressit.

OVID.

Les voilà, ces vieilles lettres!—Combien d’entre elles ont été écrites avec joie ou reçues avec angoisses!—Sur celle-ci il y a trace de larmes,—larmes séchées, qui n’ont plus de source dans le cœur duquel elles sont jaillies!

PH. CHASLES.

Scarcely were the troubled perceptions of poor Selina relieved from the confusion of gorgeous uniforms and brilliant jewels which

at daybreak still dazzled her eyes, by subsiding into a restless doze that reproduced only disjointed images of the same objects, when she was roused from her slumbers by the fond kisses and congratulations of her little brother; who had stolen on tiptoe into her room, to deposit a birth-day nosegay on her pillow.

Luckily perhaps;—for even on such an occasion, Susan would not have found courage to disturb her nursling, after her fatiguing vigils, in time for the interview with her trustee, Mr. Moran, which was to take place at eleven o'clock. Official business rendered it impossible for him to name a later hour;—and the last thing said to her by Philip Askham, as she was wearily ascending the stairs after the fête, was,—“At eleven, precisely,—Selina!—Men of business, remember, are not to be kept waiting!”

Punctual to a minute, therefore, she entered the study where her stepfather in his dressing-gown and slippers stood expecting her; and where, while the clock was yet striking, Mr. Moran, arrayed in full professional dignity, made his appearance.

Much and often as the affectionate girl had longed for that moment, now that it was come, her heart failed her; and the brilliant bloom vanished from her cheek on extending her hand to receive the packet presented by the man of business.—A single glance having apprized her that it was superscribed in her mother's handwriting, in spite of all her efforts to restrain them, tears burst in torrents from her eyes!—

But when her first passionate outburst of feeling had subsided, she seemed to recollect herself, and rose in haste to withdraw; when, ere she could bear off her treasure, Philip Askham formally interposed; and, after one of his usual benefactorial flourishes, apprized her of his promise to her uncle that the certificates contained in the packet should at once be deposited in his hands.

A hard sentence for Selina,—who had looked forward with reverential feelings to breaking the seal placed upon those precious papers by her mother, when none were near to note or check her passionate emotions. To be forced to open them in presence of her stepfather and a stranger was a cruel disappointment. But the sacrifice was not to be evaded. Her trembling hands gently undid the packet; and the act of submission was speedily rewarded by finding among the first papers that came to light the one described by Philip to De Bayhurst;—a letter, endorsed, in lieu of address,—“My marriage certificate, and the certificates of baptism of the children.” The seal, (the same that closed the outer packet,) Selina, at her stepfather's suggestion, was about to break, to ascertain that the enclosures were such as they expected, when the man of the law judiciously hinted that it might be more satisfactory to Sir Hugh to receive the packet untouched.

“Certainly, certainly!”—cried Askham, enchanted that it was in his power to offer a show of service to the husband of Lady

Anastasia;—"and as you will pass his house, my dear Sir, on your way back to the Temple, it might be as well, (the documents being important,) that you left them yourself in Grosvenor Square."

The important act of the day being thus satisfactorily accomplished, no sooner had the trustee taken his departure and Selina withdrawn to weep unmolested over her mother's letters, than Philip hastened to his room,—overpowered by the fatigues of his stewardship of the preceding night, and intending to fortify himself by a few hours' rest.

Before half that period elapsed, however, he was awakened to receive a letter from Sir Hugh de Bayhurst, said to require an immediate answer; and the immediate answer he felt disposed to return, after perusing it, was, that Sir Hugh was out of his senses!

The letter was either that of a madman, or of one grievously insulted;—accusing Philip Askham of having made him a butt, a dupe, a victim!—The publicity of a personal quarrel between them being however, just then, of all things to be avoided, Philip contented himself with a verbal message that "the letter required no answer;" and, after cursing with all his powers of execration the insolence he was not at liberty to chastise, he resolved to dress in haste and proceed to Grosvenor Square, in hopes of unravelling the mystery.

Lest Sir Hugh should refuse to see him, for explanations given or received, Philip walked straight and unannounced into the library where he was sitting.—But whatever might be the nature of De Bayhurst's misapprehensions or the cause of his resentment, the ghastly aspect of his countenance attested that he was terribly in earnest.

"I hastened to send you the certificates, Sir Hugh, according to my promise," said Philip, abruptly,—scarcely knowing where or how to begin.—

"*Certificates?*"—interrupted De Bayhurst, in a husky voice.—"You are well aware, sir, that you sent me nothing of the kind!—This blank envelope, superscribed as it is, must have been despatched to me as a mockery!"

It was too true!—In spite of its specious appearance, nothing was contained within!—No certificates were forthcoming!—

"Better have destroyed the whole packet, than remove the only documents of the smallest consequence!"—muttered Sir Hugh.—

"Why, *why* did you tantalize me by deceptive promises?"—

Philip Askham longed to rush upon him and fell to the earth the man whom for so many reasons he detested, and who, even by implication, accused him of such an act of treachery. But explanation was a more judicious alternative.

"Both the envelope and the outer packet," said he, "were secured by a seal engraved with the Saville arms, which has been in

Edward's possession ever since his poor mother's death; and is, at this moment probably in his desk at Eton! The papers must have been sealed by Mrs. Askham herself when she deposited them in the hands of her solicitor, by whom they were this morning given up. What share can I have had in all this?"—

"You certainly informed me at Eden Castle," observed De Bayhurst,—a little touched by his moderation,—“that you had yourself *seen* the certificates.”—

"I saw the envelope, now in your hands, which had every appearance of containing them;—and entertained as little doubt of it, at that time, as when I forwarded it to you some hours ago."—

"But what can possibly have been her motive for sealing and endorsing so formally a paper only calculated to create false security?" cried De Bayhurst, fixing his penetrating eyes upon the face of his guest."

"She may have believed the certificates to be still contained within—"

"*Still* contained?—You are satisfied, then, that they once really existed in her possession?"—

"Why not?—They must naturally have descended to her from your brother."—

"But who upon earth had an interest in abstracting them?"—cried De Bayhurst,—with a glance of implication, to which the scornful smile of Philip afforded an appropriate rejoinder.

"Certainly not myself!" replied he, with self-governed disdain.—“What end had *I* to accomplish in their cancelment?—The stigma of illegitimacy would be as injurious to my ward as to your nephew.—No, no! you must look elsewhere for those who are interested in setting aside the marriage!"—

"My heir-at-law, Lord Llandore, though grasping and litigious, is a man of unblemished honour!"—replied De Bayhurst.—“Nor has *he* any cause to attach importance to a certificate, which, were the locality of the marriage once ascertained, might be readily replaced.—Lord Llandore is aware that, had it been possible to attack its validity, my father would have done so.”—

"Surely the advertisement of a reward in the newspapers, might serve either to recover the certificates, or resolve the point in doubt?"

"Or, if unsuccessful, direct the attention of Lord Llandore to the evil!"—retorted De Bayhurst.—

"At all events, since the solemnization of the marriage is unquestionable, sufficient search *must* in the sequel unravel the mystery,"—rejoined Philip; "and if the persons already entrusted with—"

"I am at no loss to determine what is most advisable to be done," was the ungracious interruption of De Bayhurst. "All I have to ask from yourself, is a sacred pledge that, till the certificates are

forthcoming not a syllable on the subject shall escape your lips?"

"A request you might surely have dispensed with, to one scarcely less interested than yourself in preserving the secret!" replied Philip, with artful forbearance.

"One word more, Mr. Askham!"—cried De Bayhurst,—whose feelings were still unreasonably excited.—"It was my intention to signify this day to you, through my solicitors, what, as we have met, I may as well verbally explain; that, since a solemn engagement prevents your acceding to my wishes respecting the guardianship of my niece, and she is now of an age to make her own election, an application to Chancery will intitle her to choose a guardian for herself!"—

"She is intitled to do so without any public exposure of the kind!"—cried Philip,—with spirit,—"for so far from disputing the power I concede it to her with all my heart and soul!—Apply to Selina through your solicitor,—apply to her in person,—apply to her in any way you will,—I undertake to abide by her decision."—

By this ingenuous frankness of speech, Sir Hugh was staggered; for *he* had never heard the often reiterated promises of his niece to little Percy, so well known to Percy's father, that, come what might, they two should never be parted!—

"Accompany me this very moment to Grosvenor Square," persisted Philip,—satisfied with the impression he had made,—"and you shall have an immediate interview with your niece,—alone,—unbiassed,—before any influence can have been exercised over her mind!—And should it be her desire to place herself under your and Lady Anastasia's protection, from this very day no obstacle shall be opposed to her wishes."

Sir Hugh de Bayhurst, however, felt at present too agitated to quit the house.

"In the course of the afternoon, he would avail himself of Mr. Askham's permission."

And in so courteous and gentlemanly a manner was the permission granted, that it was impossible to part from him on other than the best of terms. But no sooner was the man thus frustrated in his hopes relieved from his detested presence, than his long-repressed disgust burst forth.—Sir Hugh was a man whose iron mask was as rarely laid aside as that of the unfortunate individual who has rendered the word proverbial;—but when he *did* unmask, the features disclosed were far from prepossessing!—

On the present occasion, there was some pretext for his violence!—Only the preceding day, he had been intitled to flatter himself that the long-coveted certificate securing the heirship of his nephew, was about to be placed in his hands; and the beloved girl, whose change of name purported her adoption into his family, about to become the darling of his household. He had risen before day—

break on the auspicious morning that was to consummate his earthly wishes ; only to learn what Lady Anastasia, tired as she was, was eager to communicate,—that, at the fête, between her lovely face and beautiful dress, Selina had commanded universal admiration. She even mentioned the flattering compliments of the Duke of York :—and, however guarded in his expressions of exultation, the mental rejoinder of her husband was—“Before the day is done, this pride of Philip Askham’s house shall be our own!”—

And now, so apt was he in interpreting the physiognomy of an enemy, that it was clear to him even *this* expectation was about to be thwarted.

At that moment he felt that “every man’s hand was against him.” “Of what avail, or rank or riches!—Through life, every object he had ever courted, was wrested from him by malicious interposition. He was a mark for the malevolence of his species!—He was the victim of human persecution!”—

Not once did it occur to him to put in question whether his desires or projects had ever regarded the gratification of any human being but himself, or to surmise that he could be the object of just retribution.

All that occurred to him was that even now his eloquence might *possibly* prevail with his brother’s child!—Selina was so mild,—so good,—so compassionate,—that if he threw himself upon her mercy,—if he told her that, in spite of appearances,—in spite of all the senseless glitter of fortune, his home was wretched ;—that he was forlorn,—companionless,—that during her brother’s absence for his education, there needed a drop of water in his desert,—that he wished to lay up store of kindness for his old age by hiving his benefits in her grateful nature,—perhaps,—*perhaps* she might relent!—

And with this view, after hours of reflection and irresolution, he proceeded slowly to the interview.

Meanwhile, Philip Askham, on his return from Grosvenor Square, had requested to speak to Selina for the intimation of her uncle’s projects.—But though he sent for her, once, twice, and again,—both by the servants and by little Percy,—no Selina made her appearance!—At length, after a fourth summons, Mrs. Markham was deputed to bring him the excuses of Miss de Bayhurst.—Selina was indisposed, and lying down. It was impossible to send word to her stepfather that over the letters of his forgotten wife, she had wept herself out of all possibility of being seen!—

To the governess, therefore, Philip entrusted his injunctions. “Sir Hugh de Bayhurst would arrive about four o’clock, to visit his niece ;—and, well or ill,—fatigued or rested,—*must* be admitted to her presence.”—

For once, in the interests of her pupil, Mrs. Markham ventured to remonstrate. Alarmed by the overpowering effect which the

sight of her mother's hand-writing had produced upon Selina, she assured Mr. Askham that "it was indispensable the visit should be deferred till the following day; the poor girl being in no state to undergo further agitation."

But Philip was not in the mood to bear remonstrance. Satisfied that the slightest appearance of reluctance to promote the meeting, on his part, would be construed by De Bayhurst into premeditated opposition, and scarcely yet recovered from the galling interview of the morning, he reiterated his commands in so harsh a tone, that it required some steadiness on the part of Mrs. Markham to state that, in the present state of Selina's mind, scruples of conscience forbade her to expose so young and timid a nature to unnecessary emotion.

But her courage was not of long continuance! There was nothing to prevent Philip Askham venting on *a governess* the rage he had not dared to manifest to the husband of Lady Anastasia. A woman so powerless and defenceless, must submit to be talked down and frowned into the dust; and he consequently enforced with an oath his request "to hear no more of her conscience or her scruples, or he should be under the necessity of desiring her to indulge them in some other establishment!"

The poor woman, who had two sons dependent on her salary for support, and appreciated no less the injury it would cause to their prospects should she be discharged in disgrace by the brother of the Marchioness of Uppingham, than the grief it would inflict on her dearly-loved charge, could only curtsy humbly and acquiescently, and withdraw;—leaving the Honourable Mr. Askham to hurry off to an appointment with the committee of the Vittoria fête, and forget in the bustle and interest of the meeting, the perplexities of his troubled home.—

For dinner, he had an engagement to Carlton House; and so late was he detained by the committee, that, on hurrying back to Brook Street to dress, he found his punctual coachman already waiting at the door; his lustrous equipage and spirited but well-broken horses exhibiting a perfection of stable discipline, becoming a disciple of the Carltonian school.—There was, consequently, not a moment to be wasted in interviews with children or governess. It was only of the valet who was kneeling at his feet to tie his shoe-strings into becoming symmetry of bow, that he was enabled to inquire whether Sir Hugh had called that afternoon; and on learning that he had not only called, but had a long interview with Miss de Bayhurst, Philip recovered his spirits sufficiently to render the turn of his well-starched cravat a chef-d'œuvre worthy of Brummell.

Half an hour afterwards, he was exhibiting the graces peculiar to one who passed for the best-bred and best-dressed man in town, in presence of one who was unquestionably the best-bred and best-

dressed of princes. No trace of the individual who had insulted an inoffensive woman;—no trace of the individual who had oppressed a feeble child!—All the chivalry wanting in his heart had taken refuge in his courtly bearing. His voice was now attuned to adulation—his smiles refined into gallantry,—his language polished into wit;—for he owed it perhaps to the excellent schooling and exquisite fooling of Grandison House, that his address exhibited a happy mean between the fastidiousness of the dandies, and the *vieille cour* politeness of the Sandbeck set; which he was able to assume at pleasure in compliment to the stately Montespan of Hertford House, or lay aside, in compliment to her son.—

“Monsieur d’Ascamp,” was the Englishman universally cited by the foreigners of fashion daily despatched to Pall Mall by more hyperborean latitudes,—as “*on ne peut plus distingué*;”—and his charm of manner, like that of all persons whose agreeableness is assumed rather than instinctive, was easily worn with its seamy side inward and its fairest gloss displayed, to captivate the approval of one so skilled as the Prince Regent in the appraisement of superficial merit.

So general was the rumour, indeed, that his Royal Highness had personally attempted the political conversion of Philip Askham, so as to remove all obstacle to his acceptance of a place in the household, that Trevor and Lesly waxed indignant at finding themselves eclipsed in the cut of a coat, or cut of an epigram, or cut of a friend, by one whose temporary rusticity had, for a time, caused his ostracism by the dandies; and still bitterer were the sarcasms of certain envious upstarts by whom it was the Prince’s pleasure to surround himself, (probably for the reason assigned by Pliny for the passion of the luxurious Romans for crystal vases: “*Crystallina quibus pretium faceret ipsa fragilitas; hæc vera luxuriæ gloria existimata est, habere quod posset statim totum perire.*”) But whatever the opposition he had to combat, in the circle where all was hollowness, brittleness, and pretence, Philip Askham was the favoured puppet!

On his way home from Carlton House, he stopped as usual at White’s, for a glance at the evening papers; or more truly, to carry off his sheaf of its daily harvest of wit, or glean the bonmots already current touching the dresses and flirtations of the night before;—the stupendous display made at the fête by the Princess of Wales and her attendant, Lady Charlotte Campbell;—or above all, the detestable taste of exhibiting as the decoration of a *guinguette* the bâton of Marshal Jourdan,—a trophy of victory that merited more generous entreatment at the hands of a foe like England. The blame of this desecration, indeed, was charged upon the shoulders of Lord Yarmouth, who had presided over the arrangements of the fête; and was supposed to have imported from Verdun strong antipathies against the Field Marshals of France.

On arriving in Brook Street, the lateness of the hour prepared

Philip Askham to find, as usual, no one stirring in the house except the valet accustomed to sit up for him; and greatly was he startled to receive a message from Mrs. Markham, requesting an immediate interview. Concluding that, having reconsidered his rebuke of the morning, she was desirous of anticipating his ill-will by giving in her resignation, he felt half inclined to refuse her request at an hour so unseemly; and wholly unable to resist the dedication of another oath to her unwarrantable impertinence.

Her object, however, was to acquaint him with the serious illness of Selina!—So grievously was she indisposed that, in the course of the evening, the family apothecary had been twice called in; who had contented himself with alarming poor Susan on Master Percy's account by indistinct mutterings of the words “measles,”—“scarlet fever,”—and “small-pox,”—as the readiest solution of a fever there was nothing to account for;—and Philip Askham, at present more vexed than conscience-stricken,—was forced to coincide in Mrs. Markham's opinion that, unless her charge were better in the morning Sir Henry Halford must be sent for.—

In the morning, she was much worse! Sir Henry was not only sent for, but admitted her state to be alarming with far less ceremony than he had used in *looking* the death-warrant of the late Lord Askham.—The malady was a severe attack of brain fever.—The agitation of mind produced by the approach of a long anticipated crisis,—the struggle of feeling caused by being forced at such a moment into the glare of a public entertainment,—the overpowering emotions arising from the perusal of her mother's letter,—and as the crowning drop of hyssop over-brimming her cup, the being torn from her sacred task to undergo a trying interview with her uncle,—an interview in which she was compelled to resist first his tears and entreaties, and lastly his reproaches,—had combined to upset her reason!—

For it was with the prayers traced by her mother's hand that no earthly persuasions should induce her, so long as she remained unmarried, to desert her little brother or quit Philip Askham's roof, still recent in her memory, that she was forced to listen to the alternate entreaties and revilings of Sir Hugh;—to hear herself implored as an angel,—reproached as an ingrate,—and at length, renounced with frantic violence as an object of hatred and malediction!

Poor child,—poor motherless girl!—The despotism of *two* such self-lovers was too heavy a judgment to fall upon a head so unoffending.

Considering that the sensation produced by the fête of fêtes was yet undiminished, it was surprising how much interest the world of fashion found to bestow on the report soon prevalent, that the beautiful girl who had been the object of such universal homage, lay at the point of death! The brightness of Selina had sparkled above

the horizon for so short a space, as to have lost nothing of its charm. As yet, she was no one's rival.—As yet, she had not an enemy.—Her recent change of name pointed her out as the co-heiress of Sir Hugh de Bayhurst; so that not even Lady Lynchmore could fancy it vulgar to sympathize in her fate; and as regarded the better-affectionated class of the community, the amiable sisters of Philip Askham wept for her as for a child of their own.

The club version of the story was that the imprudent girl committed to the charge of a still more imprudent chaperon, had ventured when overheated into the night air, on Lord Delvyn's arm, and was dying of inflammation of the lungs; a tale which, having been conveyed like a grain of tares in the beak of Henry Askham to Mansfield Street, afforded a fruitful text for the comments of his mother and Lady Isabella, already scandalized at the introduction of such a child into the perils and dangers of a public assembly.

“Her illness was a judgment upon Philip! It was no more than he might have expected,—it was no more than he deserved!”

Not even the tears shed by Lady Uppingham and her sisters, could mollify their hearts towards one so young,—so promising,—so endearing,—so worthy of a happier fate!—

The kind-hearted De Lacy girls sat grieving over poor Lina's sufferings and danger, till they all but hardened the heart of their mother; who considered it a proof of sympathy strangely indecorous on the part of her son, that, though every arrangement was made for his embarkation for Hamburg, (with a party of young men of family, who, undeterred by the evil fortune of the lamented Lord Tyrconnell, were about to volunteer in the service of Russia, that they might have a touch at Napoleon in person rather than with his Peninsular generals,) he refused to quit the country, till the fate of Selina was decided. Lord Delvyn was vulgar enough to feel the impossibility of leaving the young creature who had so lately hung upon his arm, in all the brilliancy and buoyancy of youth and loveliness, extended on a bed of death!—

“Many true words are said in jest!” cried he to his sister Emilia; “and I promise you that when I told my father, the other night, there was nothing to fear from the *iska* and *ouska* Polish princesses he was joking me about, because Lina was to be my wife,—I was more in earnest than you supposed. Three years hence, when, (if God should spare her,) she will be just old enough to marry, I trust I shall be tamed down or polished up into something worthier her acceptance. Not equal to what she would have deserved!—For I have long foreseen all she would become, as surely as that the bud on yonder moss-rose tree will expand into a beautiful rose.—But alas! why talk about it now!—The thing was not to be;—and in bidding good-bye to England, I shall carry with me the sad remembrance of leaving all I love best in the grave!”

When Sophia Askham, judiciously despatched by the dowager to

St. James's Square with tidings of a slight amendment in the state of Miss de Bayhurst, was welcomed by Lord Delvyn with transports of joy, it was precisely from the cause which had always rendered her an object of interest to his feelings,—because she was the dearest friend of Selina!

But if such the interest of comparative strangers, what were the surly self reproaches of her cold-hearted stepfather on hearing her recovery despaired of;—what, the anguish of the selfish kinsman who, conscious of the struggle of feeling to which he had exposed the unhappy child on the eve of her seizure, accused himself of blighting the fairest flower that ever grew, and of crushing the gentle nature that contained the germ of a second Evelyn!—What cowardly revenge to wreak on the memory of her by whom he had been disdained!—What treachery to the noble boy whose affections he had won by promises of protection to his sister! But there, at least, retribution would not be wanting.—To Edward, whose attachment was so dear to him, he should have to render a terrible account!—

The self-convicted man had not courage to enter the house in Brook Street, where, from the first day of his niece's illness, Lady Anastasia had established herself as nurse. He contented himself with besetting the door with inquiries,—ten,—twenty—*numberless* times a-day; and the world, incapable of understanding such deep sympathy in the illness of a child unless on the part of parents, attributed to any cause but the true one the cadaverous aspect of De Bayhurst, as he fixed his wistful eyes upon the walls containing all that was left to him of the Evelyn of Holmehurst Hanger!—

“I met De Bayhurst in Brook Street yesterday, as I was going to call on Argyll,” said Horace Trevor to Lesly, one afternoon, at Watier's; “and I declare, he looked as if he came out of the tombs!”

“Or was desirous of sending some one *into* them!”—rejoined Sir Walter. “Askham's daughter, you know, is at the point of death, from fretting because her uncle signified his intention to remove her from that infected house—”

“Into his *own*?—A curious choice of lazaret!” said Trevor, shrugging his shoulders.

“Well!—I wish poor Askham well through it.—A jealous husband is one of the most dreadful disorders going,—short of the plague! What a *trouvaille* for Knighton, (the Prince's new Galen), if he could discover an antidote, enabling one by inoculation to take it kindly!”

“Askham would take it kindly of *you*, I suspect, not to talk quite so loud about his infirmities, in presence of such a pair of ears and such a rumour-like confusion of tongues, as those of Hinton Hort!—I wish Watier would write up over his door “Licensed to deal in scandal to be discussed on the premises;” for by

Heavens, the things said in this room are echoed from one end of London to the other. Old Townsend declares that, if employed to trace out the assassins of a murdered reputation, he should proceed straight to Watier's!"

The party accused as newsvender of the club secrets, took an early opportunity of sneaking out of the room,—thereby tacitly pleading guilty to the accusation. But Echo was already on the alert; and by the end of the fortnight during which poor Selina's life was despaired of, the reputation of Lady Anastasia was in danger almost as imminent.

At length, Sir Henry Halford declared that his interesting patient was safe; and on his bended knees her uncle acknowledged the mercy of Heaven, which had somewhat more share in her recovery than the court physician. But he could not at once recover his cheerfulness of aspect; and the stragglers left in town,—the stragglers at that time *always* left in town till the 12th of August inscribed the letters G. P. R. in coloured lamps over the tradesmen's shops and placed grouse upon lordly tables,—persisted in attributing his hollow eyes and doleful looks, to the influence of conjugal desperation.

On this occasion, Grandison House became vulnerable to the scandal-mongers! Even in the aristocratic sanctuary of the strawberry bed, Mrs. Gwatkins and Mrs. Candours are to be found; and one burning day in August, the Duchess of Sandbeck chose to refresh the fevered veins of Lady Grandison by apprizing her that, while *her* whole thoughts were engrossed by an impending action between Barclay de Tolly and the Prince of Neufchatel, the world was in equal expectation of one between Sir Hugh de Bayhurst, Bart., and the Honourable Philip Askham!

"The name of my niece Anastasia is in every one's mouth,"—added the Duchess; "and unless prompt measures are adopted, I think it my duty to inform you that it appears more than probable this imprudent couple will elope."

An elopement?—A vulgar catastrophe liable to be written about by newspapers, and groaned over by servants' halls,—reducing the dear Stasy in whom her pride delighted to the level of all that she despised?—Never had Lady Grandison so envied her daughter the speed of her famous greys, as when desirous to fly to Grosvenor Square, and interrogate her in person concerning the high treason, or low, of which she stood thus heinously arraigned!—

The code of morality developed by her ladyship on this occasion, was perhaps better calculated to "make the angels weep," than the innumerable "fantastic tricks" by which she had long justified their tears!—

"What is this dreadful story, my dear, about you and Mr. Askham?"—cried she, throwing herself on the sofa of Lady Anastasia's gorgeous dressing-room.—"You cannot be in your senses, dear

Stasy, if you *really* think of quitting your husband's house! If your conduct have made him unhappy, *why* add insult to injury, by making him ridiculous?"

"There are circumstances under which no woman of feeling can remain under her husband's roof?" replied Lady Anastasia, in a voice whose hollowness bore equal testimony with her haggard looks, to her sufferings of the preceding fortnight.

"None in the world,—none in the world!"—cried Lady Grandison, petulant from opposition.—"A more erroneous view of the case could not be taken!—If dissatisfied with your proceedings, Sir Hugh is not the man who would scruple about turning you out of doors; and as your being still here suffices to prove that *he*, at least, is content, why injure your whole family by bringing us to disgrace?—Exposures of this nature, Stasy, are the bane of society,—the shame of the country;—and *any* expedient, or palliative, or alternative, is infinitely preferable. As regards yourself, such a step would be worse than suicide!—Have you ever reflected on what it would be to leave such a home as this?—A house, nearly the best in London,—where you have everything your own way;—the most perfect equipage at your absolute disposal,—(no bore of sick horses such as *I* have always had to contend against!) diamonds, secondary only to crown jewels; and the most charming opera-box I know of, (some people prefer the Duchess of Norcliffe's, —but, take it for both opera and ballet, yours is certainly the best!) a fine country-seat, with the neighbourhood, though indifferent, improving; no children to interfere with your pursuits; and your husband too much engrossed by his nephew and niece, to trouble himself about your comings and goings!—What can you want more, child?—I only ask you, what can you want more?—Is there a point on which your caprices are ungratified?—Certainly not!—I therefore consider it but right to lay the affair candidly before you; and to assure you, as your mother, that it would be the most monstrous ingratitude towards Sir Hugh, as well as cruelty to myself who have always so loved and indulged you, were you to take any rash step!"—

Lady Grandison paused,—only from having exhausted her breath, (for her voluble address was delivered in a single sentence!) But her poor daughter, whose face was concealed on the arm of the sofa, attempted no interruption.

"But, above all," resumed she, "have you considered what you would come to *after* your *coup de tête*?—I put Mr. Askham out of the question, (though he is said to have the worst temper and coldest heart that ever lived;) but have you ever contemplated the condition of *divorcées* in this moral country where they are excommunicated like the parias of the East?—Or even (for a divorce I doubt whether he would obtain,) of women parted from their husbands?—At court, you would not be received!—The dear Duchess

of York (the best-natured woman in the world) does not, for her best friend, overlook the objection!—Your aunt Sandbeck, whose set, the *élite* of the *grand monde*, places her next to the royal family, would never hear your name mentioned again; and you would be reduced for acquaintance, Stasy, to that dreadful second set, of which I have always steered so clear; people without conscience, decency, or tact, among whom you would be wholly lost!—My dear child, reflect seriously upon this!—Think how we have seen poor Lady Luttrell mope a whole night alone in her opera-box!—Remember the fate of Lady Elinor Lee, whose sisters refused to go and take leave of her when she was dying!—Some people even carry their prejudices so far that they will not take a servant from a woman living apart from her husband; and that Ayton, whom I found such a treasure, had been two years out of place, because no one would receive a character of her from the Marchioness of Arlington!—Severe enough, you will say.—But the decencies of society are to be respected!”—

Again did Lady Grandison pause,—fancying she had made an impression. But only to resume with redoubled unction.—

“With respect to Mr. Askham,” continued she,—“(for however vexatious, speak of him I *must*!)—how has he *dared* to insinuate himself into your happy home, to ruin your prospects in life?—What has *he* to offer, pray, in exchange for all he would tempt you to abandon?—Did he not see enough of you in the world, without hunting you to your fireside, and exposing you to the cruellest aspersions?—Twice every week you were certain of meeting at Grandison House; and almost every night elsewhere!—Why, therefore, commit you in the esteem of society and destroy your domestic happiness, by seeking a reconciliation with De Bayhurst only as a blind to his infamous pursuit!—

“*My domestic happiness!*”—faintly responded Lady Anastasia, without raising her head.—

“You may cavil at the *word*, child,—but its sense, at least, is undeniable!—Ask twenty women of your own condition in life, (for people should be tried by their peers!) whether you have not everything this world can afford, to render life happy;—and nineteen out of twenty, however good their own position, would be glad to exchange it with yours.—*That* is what I call domestic happiness! And as regards Philip Askham—”

“As regards Philip Askham,”—interrupted the miserable young woman, suddenly withdrawing her pale face from the sofa cushion, and flinging back her hair from her face, that nothing might interpose between her and the mother who was about to indulge in invectives against one for whom she was prepared to sacrifice everything,—here and hereafter,—“as regards *him*, mother, not a word!—You knew of my attachment to him.—You heard it from my own lips,—heard it on my marriage-day,—and silenced my wild avowals

only lest they should reach De Bayhurst!—You sowed the wind, mother, but it is I—I—who have reaped the whirlwind!—What a life it has been,—what a life,—what a life!—You talk of what it may *be*!—You try to terrify me by the prospect of evils to come!—If you only knew the hours I have undergone!—Ask these gaudy walls—ask this detested house which you prize so highly,—ask these accursed gewgaws,”—cried she, wildly seizing some trinkets scattered on the table beside her, and dashing them to the ground,—“this vile rubbish, for which I bartered my happiness,—ask all and everything around me, what a desolate creature I was, till my wretchedness obtained some sympathy where sympathy was ever dear!”

“You shock me beyond measure, Anastasia, by all this violence!”—remonstrated the astonished Lady Grandison. “From me, thank Heaven, you never imbibed such habits of unladylike excitement.—Melodrama,—mere melodrama!—To go through the world with credit to yourself, my dear, the business of life must be more calmly considered.—Compose yourself—therefore—compose yourself.”—

“*Oh, mother!*”—was all that Lady Anastasia could utter,—pressing her hand convulsively upon the heart she felt was breaking.

“I have, at all events, fulfilled my duty by placing your prospects fairly before you,” added Lady Grandison,—perceiving by the chimes of a musical timepiece near her, which most inappropriately interrupted her discourse, that it was near the hour of her appointment at Hertford House,—so as to hasten the peroration of her harangue;—“and I now fairly warn you, Stasy, not to count on *my* weak tenderness to uphold you in your folly. Painful as it may be to me, I pledge my honour that I will never see you again, if once you desert your husband’s roof!”—

She went.—She kept her “appointment;” and within an hour of her ladyship’s departure from Grosvenor Square, where, like the wind of the desert, she penetrated only to leave greater desolation behind, Lord Grandison, who, since his daughter’s marriage, had not twice crossed her threshold for a morning visit, was suddenly announced—On hearing his name, Lady Anastasia, anticipating, from what had already passed, the scene that was to follow, was seized with so universal a trembling, that not a step could she advance to receive him!—

Lord Grandison came straight up to her, however, and kissed her affectionately;—then, holding her at arm’s length from him, with her hands still pressed in his, surveyed her deliberately,—enabling her also to perceive that his handsome and manly face was blanched to ghastly paleness.—His appearance fully accounted for the incoherency with which, after a moment’s pause, he abruptly addressed her.

“I heard a dreadful whisper just now at the club,” said he,—

while his daughter sank almost lifeless on the sofa;—"and hurried hither, my poor Stasy, sooner than anywhere else,—to ask whether it were true!—I never knew you utter a falsehood, my girl!—I *know* I can rely upon your word,—Yet I'm half afraid to hear your answer, Stasy,—*more* than half afraid!—Your mother and I never hit it off.—We were not suited to each other;—and feeling I could not make her happy, I never interfered with her.—Poor woman,—it was hard but she should have her amusements, when she always let me have mine.—And I have had nothing to complain of.—She came of a good stock : and knew too well what was due to her own pedigree, to risk the honour of my name ; so that, if all were to come over again, I am afraid I should do again as I have done!—But there is one thing of which I accuse myself.—If I let Lady Grandison have her own way in other things,—in *your* behalf, I should have interfered! I saw you always pretty,—always good-humoured,—and was content.—But blood is one thing, and breaking another; and I was bound to take care, Stasy, that you were made what a woman *ought* to be —I never *did*!—I trusted to your mother!—I was proud of you, and loved you, better perhaps, than I seemed—(being always bothered about one thing or another.) But to be proud of you and love you was not enough.—At least, I feel so *now*!"—

He paused; and taking out his handkerchief, wiped away the cold dew that had risen on his forehead. Lord Grandison was not the man to make a display of sensibility; but nature was stirring with painful energy in his heart.

"And so," continued he, after fetching a deep breath, "when a word was accidentally dropped before me just now,—inferring that,—inferring, I say, Stasy, that—that you had disgraced yourself,—I dreaded, my poor child, for my *own* sake, to know more. For as there is a living God, if you cannot look me honestly in the face, I will blow my brains out!—Not because a name is dishonoured which had nothing before to be ashamed of; but because I could never, *never* forgive myself for not having watched more carefully over the happiness of my only child!"

Ere he concluded, his voice was broken by sobs; and when the poor delinquent before him threw herself distractedly into his arms, instead of hesitating to receive her, he clasped her to his heart with fervent and reiterated embraces; as if, till that moment, he had never felt how much she was his own!—

The tears of poor Lady Anastasia were falling with an unrestrainedness that refreshed her aching heart, when, lo! the door of the dressing-room revolved slowly on its hinges, and De Bayhurst, who, till lately, had rarely invaded its precincts, stood suddenly before them. At sight of him, the colour returned to the blanched face of Lord Grandison, who made no attempt to accost him.—But the readiness and composure of his greeting soon sufficed to prove that, whatever others might be suffering, *his* mind was at ease.—

“ I saw your horse at the door, Lord Grandison,” said he, “ and was determined to come and beg you would persuade my poor wife to take a little air and exercise. Her devoted attendance in the sick room of my little niece, (her kindness to whom I can never sufficiently acknowledge!) has made her, as you perceive, so low and nervous, that I am most anxious to get her out of town.—For our anxieties, thank God, are now at an end!—The little girl is out of danger; and Knighton and Halford have just informed me that, if her convalescence proceed fairly, in ten days’ time, Selina may be removed to the sea.”

Lord Grandison was satisfied. Since Sir Hugh de Bayhurst was thus thoroughly absorbed in the condition of his niece, the estrangement between him and Lady Anastasia threatened no very alarming consequences. The kind-hearted man felt greatly relieved!—The happiness of his daughter might require parental care. Her *safety* was not endangered!

Meanwhile, for once in her giddy life, the restlessness of Lady Grandison had been of service. Her visit at Hertford House had accomplished an invaluable benefit. The following day, Philip Askham was requested by the Regent to accompany to Germany, not in a public capacity but as a private friend, the deputation about to convey to the Emperor of Russia the insignia of the Order of the Garter.

At a chapter recently held, the order had been conferred on his Imperial Majesty; and Sir Thomas Tyrwhitt, accompanied by the proper officers, was to proceed to the head-quarters of the Allied army, with the splendid paraphernalia prepared as a present from the Prince Regent. To Philip Askham were entrusted his private letters;—a commission having no connexion with ministers or politics, and imposed upon him with a cordiality of friendship rendering it impossible to decline.

Even the condition of Selina afforded not a shadow of excuse; for the moment Lady Grandison conveyed in triumph to Grosvenor Square intelligence of Philip’s appointment, Sir Hugh de Bayhurst insisted, not alone that the invalid should become their inmate during his absence, but, knowing her predilections, that her brother—the little heir of the house of Askham—should be the companion of her visit. The Sussex air, he said, would be more advantageous for both than the ruder climate of Eden Castle; and all parties agreed that Percy would be sure to do well under the fostering care of Lady Anastasia!—

So rapidly was the whole affair transacted, that, before the departure of the deputation from Carlton House for a spot which at that moment concentrated the interest and observation of every country in Europe, Susan and her two charges were already on their road to Bayhurst.

“ I should be plaguy sorry if I thought Phil would ever take a

fancy to Hurstwood!"—cried Lord Middlemore to his wife, (on reading in the newspaper a pompous account of the embarkation of the party, and of the splendid new carriage launched on the occasion by the Honourable Mr. Askham,)—"for he would be sure to get it!—Phil has only to open his mouth to yawn,—and it is filled with manna and quails!—Were he to cut somebody's throat, the Humane Society would bestow a gold medal that year, as a premium for wilful murder!—At this moment when, if De Bayhurst were to shoot him, no man could possibly find fault, that unaccountable fellow makes himself head-nurse to his offspring. And though, whenever Phil *does* vote, it is against ministers, the Regent himself manages to patch up a little appointment for him which is no appointment;—that is, which gives no umbrage to Downing Street, or to the old leather glove which Phil pretends to call his conscience!"

"Thank goodness, he is safe out of England!"—was the fervent response of Susan.—"Lord Uppingham had probably some share in smoothing the way for him; for Margaret has been as anxious as myself."

"I wish he'd smooth the way for *me*!"—cried Lord Middlemore—drawing on his gloves, as his team was at that moment brought round the door,—“for the roads hereabouts are as heavy as Phil and his new carriage are likely to find them in Germany!—Come,—tumble up, Susy.—*One* spring, and you're all right!—Needs must, you know, when your husband drives!—And now, rough or smooth—*now* for twelve miles an hour!"—

CHAPTER XXIX.

PEDRO. If he be sad, he wants money!

CLAUDIO. Nay, an he be not in love, there is no believing in old signs. He brushes his hat o' mornings!—What does *that* bode?—

SHAKSPEARE.

Un petit-maitre, en vérité,
Est un être bien insipide;
Son corps est toujours apprêté,
Lorsque sa tête est vide;
Ne s'occuper que de l'habit
Et des cravattes qu'il doit mettre,—
Toujours courir après l'esprit,—
Voilà le petit-maitre!

Dans les arts faire l'amateur,
Parler science et peinture,—
Se montrer en tout connaisseur,
Ignorer tout, hors la parure;
Insolemment sur tout gloser,
N'être rien,—vouloir tout paraître;—
Excepté lui, tout mépriser,
Voilà le petit-maitre!—

Jargonner d'un ton suffisant,
 Toilette, chevaux et voiture,
 Juger de tout sans jugement,—
 Au bon sens toujours faire injure;—
 Chanter,—persifler,—ricaner,—
 N'être jamais ce qu'on doit être,—
 Et par bon ton déraisonner,—
 Voilà le petit-maitre!—

BOUFFLERS.

On Philip Askham's departure, six weeks were assigned by the Regent as the limit of his absence; but long before the nature of his duties admitted of his return,—nay, before Edenbourne had half recovered its amazement on hearing that its representative in parliament had been despatched as star-and-garter-bearer to foreign parts, was fought that memorable battle of Leipsic, which forwarded, as by a seven-leagued stride, the pacification of Europe.

Not that in England its influence was, at the moment, properly appreciated;—for ere Philip made his reappearance at Carlton House, to explain, more clearly than the crabbed details of bulletins, the triumphant attitude of the Allies, and disastrous position of the French, Lord Castlereagh had quitted England with his suite; to represent the interests of Great Britain in a conference that purported to accomplish, by the crooked contrivances of diplomacy, a peace it was on the eve of enforcing at the point of the bayonet!—And well has that phantom peace of Chatillon,—the most eminent blunder of the Uppingham cabinet, (“*virī magni, etiam cum errant, docet*,”) been designated by aftertimes, “the peace that passeth all understanding.”

To trace the foreign adventures of the man thus fortuitously reinstalled in the career for which he was originally intended, does not fall within the outlines of a story professing to describe the aborigines of the parish of Edenbourne, rather than the individual whom the French papers described as “Sir Askham,” and the *Algemeine Zeitung* as the handsomest man beheld on Saxon ground, since the days of Albert the Bear;—and whom Tchernicheff, and the other irresistibles of Cæsar's camp, would have considered a dangerous rival, had his waist been a foot shorter and girthed into the shape of an hourglass.

Suffice it that, on his return to London, the victory he achieved single-handed over the carpet knights of Watier's, was scarcely less remarkable than that accomplished at Leipsic by the Holy Alliance!—To have heard, even as an amateur, the roar of imperial cannon,—to have conversed face to face with an Emperor who had conversed face to face with Napoleon,—and to have hobbled and nobbed with those whose very names even the newsmen's horns trembled to utter,—was enough to justify the assiduity with which the fashionable world picked up every syllable let fall by a *quasi*

hero, embalmed in the breath of emperors and the breath of meerschauts.

Already the far west was beginning to denounce as frivolous and vexatious, the monotonous impertinence of the dandies,—whose essencing, and starching, and mockery of better men than themselves, could not long supply the deficiency of every manly virtue; and though Fashion

Quem penes arbitrium est, et jus, et norma,

had originally accepted them as a palatable relief from the ruffianism of the bang-up school, forthcoming heroism cast its shadow before in the person of Philip Askham;—whose bronzed complexion, assured deportment, and manly growth of beard and moustache, (at a moment when the best chins in England were stubbled,) appeared to savour honourably of the roughness of the camp.

While questioned at Carlton House concerning Schwartzenberg and Wittgenstein,—Blucher and Platoff,—till the very sound of their names became a torment to him, the Watierians ventured indeed to inquire whether the black cravats of the linenless and laundressless campaigners were tolerably becoming, or Russian oil really of Russian growth.—But from such delicate investigations, his button and attention were sure to be withdrawn by the tremulous hand of one of the edentated and bald-headed K.B.s, whose red ribands and senility were paraded on state occasions in Pall Mall, in compliment to the Horse-guards; and whose catechism touching the manœuvres of Wrede and the Crown Prince, or the route of the retreat across the Saale, might have puzzled the accuracy of a gazette.

He was, in short, the lion of the hour;—and so pleasant being his position as court newsman to Royalty and trump card of the dinner-givers, he was in no haste to repair to Bayhurst for the resumption of a bondage which, long before he left England, had proved sufficiently galling to his shoulders.

On the plea of an accumulation of family business during his absence, and the urgency of his parliamentary duties on his return, he declared it to be quite impossible for him to leave London. His letter of acknowledgment to De Bayhurst for the harbour so kindly granted to “his two children” during his absence, gave instructions accordingly that they should be despatched with their attendants to town;—and the heart-broken woman who, though she had pledged herself to her parents that, on Mr. Askham’s arrival from Germany, no communication beyond the common civilities of society should pass between them, had fully prepared herself to be at least *tempted* into the infringement of her vow, perceived that, of her honour and happiness, the wreck was total!—

“I fancied that vulgar impostor, Geramb, had put capillary at-

traction out of vogue," observed Lesly to Trevor one night at Lady Heathcote's, where an open-mouthed audience was surrounding Philip, as they might have done an Oriental tale-teller or Italian improvisatore.—"Yet you see Askham's Saracenic moustache carries everything before it"

"So would my poodle's,—if I chose to twist it à la Blucher."

"Byron declares that if Askham goes on lionizing at parties in this way, people will send their footmen to keep a front row," drawled the rival dandy.

"He would do better to convert his popularity into ready money. I am afraid there are no more Miss Tylney Longs in the market. But Askham is not nice! One might find him some city widow or an heiress from St. Mary Axe to set him on his legs again. I heard thirty to one laid yesterday, at White's, that the Allies are at Paris before Easter Sunday! Sad news for poor 'Sir Askham!'—Like Faulconbridge's visage,

'A pops him out

At least of good five thousand pounds a year."

"But I thought he was to marry that sixteen-hands-high daughter of Lynchmore's,—as much like an heiress, as her father is like a conjuror!"—

"Did you not hear Sir Robert de Lacy say, last night, that his niece had been engaged these two years to some horrid Irish neighbour at Lynchmore Castle: and that whenever her mother attacks her about the vulgarity of marrying a man with an O before his name, Lynchmore protests that one of the greatest men at the French court is a Connaughtman, and called the Duke of O'Trant!"

"Ay, I remember.—De Bayhurst, who was listening with all his ears, seemed so confoundedly surprised!—Who knows but the match with Philip was made a stalking horse by Lady Anastasia?"—

Very little, however, did these superficial observers suspect the extent of De Bayhurst's astonishment. The discovery of the groundlessness of his favourite project,—not alone as a bar to his hopes of obtaining the permanent care of Selina, but as an evidence of the deceptions practised upon him by his wife,—filled him with indignation.—If Lady Anastasia had not actually *announced* the match to him, she had certainly sanctioned the report:—and what but an evil motive could be the origin of such duplicity?—Was he, after all, a dupe?—Did a secret understanding exist between her and the object of her early, and as he had hoped, long-repentent attachment?

The thought was madness.—The doubt *must* be cleared up.—But he would go carefully to work.—He had ample leisure to resolve himself both as to the deceit of his wife and the still deeper turpitude in which it must originate.—He had come to town for a day, only to escort Selina and her little charge to Brook Street.—On

the morrow, he was to return to Bayhurst; where Anastasia, completely off her guard, might be entrapped into such answers to his interrogations, as would determine the extent of her connivance. On *that* should depend whether he spent the season in the country; or enabled her to pass it in town with more than all her former means of enjoyment.

Meanwhile, if Philip found cause to congratulate himself on being “well out of” the *liaison* which had excited so much uneasiness at Grandison House, it was the only point on which he had grounds of gratulation.—The disorder of his finances was brought before him in black and white, by the importunate demonstrations of Christmas bills, gathered like snow drifts on a quagmire during his absence; and to complete his perplexity, every successive letter from Lord Askham, announced with sure conviction that the downfall of Napoleon was at hand, and on *this* occasion, his arrival in England would not be procrastinated by going round by Toulouse!

During the last two years, the correspondence between the brothers had received some check in cordiality, from the difficulty experienced by Philip in supplying the unreasonable demands of the *détenu*, now that a new shaft of extravagance was sunk in the already overworked mine of the Askham estates. But in the glee of Lord Askham’s reviving hopes, this coldness seemed suddenly forgotten; and even Philip, notwithstanding the disastrous plight of his affairs, could scarcely refrain from sympathizing in his brother’s joy at the conclusion of more than a dozen years’ exile and captivity. The Allies were already within a day’s march of Paris; and the English prisoners, who had been removed into the interior for greater security, impatiently awaited, in the barren department of La Creuse, their signal of release!

Already, Philip had ordered the best apartments in Brook Street to be got ready for his brother;—and little Percy, who was prepared both by sire and nurse and governess to charm the eyes and win the heart of the noble uncle of whom he was the presumptive heir, stood at the window all day, in expectation of seeing him arrive by every carriage that stopped at the door. That Lord Askham would come otherwise than alone, had never entered into his brother’s calculations. For if *he* were delighted to enfranchise himself from a *liaison* with the loveliest woman in England, only because it was of two years’ duration,—how much rather poor Percy; who, for the last eleven, had been struggling against the tyrannies of a handsome termagant, of whom it would now be easy to rid himself by a decent annuity.

Just, however, as he was making up his mind to proceed by the mail to Dover to await the arrival of one who had already let pass more days than might have been expected, since the memorable one that brought intelligence of the conquest of Paris and capitulation

of Napoleon, an evening paper (which Philip was luckily the first to take from the hands of the waiter at White's,) apprized him that, among the arrivals from Calais by the packet of the preceding night, —were—“Lord and Lady Askham and family!”

Congratulating himself on being able to hurry home before the explosion of Copleyan jokes to which this strange blunder of the Courier would certainly give rise, he reached Brook Street just in time to hail, alighting from a hackney coach, a middle-aged man, somewhat bloated in figure and claretty in complexion,—whose locks of sable-silvered so little denoted the brother only a year older than himself, that (the strange-looking curly-eared hat and short-waisted coat of the stranger being evidently exotics,) he decided it to be Lord Askham's valet, and was on the point of asking tidings of his master.

“Phil,—old boy,—how are you!”—was, however, a salutation too English to be mistrusted; and Philip could only hope that the still older boy whose outward man he thought so amazing, had not penetrated the nature of his mistake!

On being folded to the heart of the companion of his boyhood after a separation equalling a third of their lives, his predominant feeling was anxiety lest his brother should suspect he had been taken for a servant; or lest some scout of the dandies should have already caught sight of the singular habiliments of the new-comer.

“But where are your baggage and servants?”—cried he, —when Lord Askham sufficiently recovered himself to be intelligible. “Your rooms here are in readiness to receive them.”

“Thanks, — thanks! We are too large a party to encumber you. —We have put up at Sablonière's, as the best place for foreigners. Neither Lady Askham nor the children speak a word of English.”

Again, Philip prayed inwardly that his surprise and disgust might not be *too* apparent.

“I long to show you my young ones,”—said the warm-hearted Lord Askham. “You won't find them perhaps so well taught or so well *ficelé* as this little fellow,”—(patting the shoulder of Percy, who was already established on his uncle's knee;)—“but they are lively thriving creatures, and ail nothing!”

Philip could scarcely repress a groan. At present, comment or inquiry were impossible.

“I should like you, however, to come first with me to Mansfield Street,” continued Lord Askham, — whose heart seemed overflowing with the charities of life. “Edmund's at Eton, I fancy,—and nobody at home with my poor mother but Sophy,—whom I left on the nurse's knee! Strange, out of her large family, to have only a daughter to keep her company in her old age!”—

“You will find she considers even Sophia somewhat *de trop*,—for she is wild to marry her,”—replied Philip. — “But if we go now,” added he, (horror-struck at the idea of venturing, in the semi

daylight of an April evening, in a hackney coach with a man whose appearance would have made the fortune of Liston, in a new farce,) “we shall come upon the dowager just at dinner time.”

“And what then?—Though I am hurrying back to dine with my family, I really *can’t* sit down till I have had a glimpse of the old lady!”

Philip dared not forewarn him how much his filial sympathy was thrown away:—still less, of the probability that his indiscreet allusions to his “family” would produce a hurricane of maternal indignation.

Too much interested, however, in conciliating the lord of Eden Castle, to hesitate about compliance with his first request, away they rumbled to Mansfield Street; the musty “straw-bottom” which so distressed the dandy susceptibilities of the Carltonian, awakening in Lord Askham’s mind only pleasant reminiscences of his days of schoolboyhood!

It was *not* pleasant to him, however, to find the subrogate of his honours so imperfectly versed in the family statistics, that *he* had to inform him of Richard’s regiment being quartered in Nova Scotia; and the frigate in which Claude was fighting for his second epaulet, appointed to the Mediterranean station.—

“Gone to dine at Eske Hill,”—was the answer of the servants in Mansfield Street to the inquiry for Lady Askham;—and, little suspecting that such was the answer always given to intruders at dinner time, by order of the dowager, and Eske Hill being out of limit at so late an hour for the extension of their ramble, Lord Askham insisted on carrying his brother back with him to Sablonnière’s.—“He had all sorts of questions to ask,—and he *must* show him the children!”—

Respecting “the three girls”—his sisters, (who were now three peeresses, though altered in no other particular,) his questions were easily answered; for their own letters had kept their elder brother *au fait* to the number of their olive branches, and the incomputability of their domestic happiness. But on inquiring after Henry, it required Philip’s personal endorsement to the certificates of newspaper report, to enable Lord Askham to conceive the present colossal proportions of the self-conceited schoolboy he had left so mere a pigmy.

“So much the better,—so much the better!”—cried he, after listening to Philip’s somewhat invidious enumeration of the amount of sinecures by which Lord Uppingham had contrived to steady the flight of his paper kite—“Since parliament chooses there should be such abuses as patent places, why shouldn’t *our* family profit, as well as another? I’m glad to hear Henry is independent,—and heartily glad that he wants nothing from *me*. Because,—though God forbid I should play the niggard with one of my father’s sons,—it goes against me to give with a grudging heart; and from

the very school-room, where, as a boy he used to sap under the table only that he might pass for a genius, Henry has always been my laughing-stock and aversion."

His next query regarded Eden Castle; and on reaching such tender ground as the clearings effected within the last two years,—Philip was struck dumb on learning that, in a couple of days, Lord Askham intended to proceed to his château!—

"At *this* time of year,—at the very beginning of the season?"—cried he, in utter consternation.

"What the deuce is the season to *me*?"—was the pertinent reply of the stuffy middle-aged man, in the napless beaver.—"I have no duties in parliament; and you don't suppose that, after the habits of ease I have enjoyed for the last twelve years, I shall ever be ass enough to varnish myself into one of the *papier mâché* puppets of fashion?"—

On recalling to mind the Helen Middlemores of this match-hunting metropolis,—Philip applauded this resolution.

"Besides, I'm all impatience to get a sight of the old place,"—resumed Lord Askham,—from whose memory the opprobrium of the 'dreary pile'—was effaced;—"and Lady Askham and the children, who have heard so much of it, cannot rest till they have seen Eden Castle."

Philip was petrified. He had heard other *roués* dignify by their patronymic those who ought to be nameless.—But this daring tone of recognition was *too* audacious.

"You surely do not intend to introduce your———*family*—publicly at Eden Castle"—cried he,—with sudden assumption of spirit.

"And why *not*?"—

"Out of deference to the honour of our family name,—out of respect to the memory of my father."—

"My own children are quite as near my heart as my parents," retorted Lord Askham; "and I consider them a credit to us all."

"But consider the shock which such a proceeding would create in the county!—Edenbourne is a primitive place;—the neighbourhood is highly strict in its morality!"

"Curse its morality!"—cried Lord Askham, a little nettled.—"Its notions, I remember, were about as its clay,—and Eden Castle none the pleasanter for either!—But as my wife has not the smallest pretension to be noticed by Mrs. Gwatkin, or to notice the apothecary's lady—"

"Your—*wife*!"—ejaculated Philip, aghast.

"Come, come Phil,—none of Henry's stage starts!"—rejoined his brother, struggling to recover his temper.—"Don't pretend ignorance about what I never formally announced, because I saw you had heard from others what it was not very pleasant to write about."

“You are actually — *married*?” — persisted Philip, — no longer conscious of the jolts and rumblings of the coach.

“Do you remember,” said Lord Askham, — as if he thought this feint of ignorance scarcely worthy reply — “that when my father hectored me so confoundedly about that first unlucky loss of mine at *roulette*, I wrote you word that my family would one day bitterly repent their want of forbearance!” —

“You do not mean that the marriage took place *then*?” — cried Philip, — who had flattered himself it might be a recent act of insanity; and that the “young ones” of whom his brother seemed so proud, were at least illegitimate.

“Not *very* long afterwards!” — was the indefinite rejoinder of Lord Askham. — “On that occasion, when you and every one seemed in combination to harass and torment me, poor Léontine displayed such genuine and disinterested devotion, — offering to sell everything she possessed in the world, (which was not much, poor soul,) to release me from my difficulties, — that I saw *where* I might depend for friendship; and rewarded it to the best of my ability.”

A wild gasp for breath was the only comment of his companion.

“You see, Phil my boy,” — resumed his brother, profiting by his muteness, — “one must take life *en philosophe*, or *en âne bâté*; and I am one of those who don’t care to be a beast of burthen to so sorry a master as the world. — Situated as I have been for the last twelve years, — exiled, isolated, forgotten, — a secondary object to every member of my family, having to obtain my own property with as much trouble as though begging for an alms, — and with every prospect of remaining a prisoner till my head, grey enough as it is, was white as a ptarmigan, — a man is forced to take his situation between his two hands, and consider how it may be mended.”

“And you thought to mend it by such a marriage?” — faltered Philip, shrugging his shoulders.

“What other sort of marriage was in my power? — At all events, I am justified by the result. — For during a third of my life which would otherwise have been forlorn as Robinson Crusoe’s, I have enjoyed the society of an affectionate wife and children. — And so, my dear Phil, if we are to remain as good friends as we have ever been, (which I earnestly trust may be the case,) don’t talk again of ‘*such* a marriage’ to one whom it has made completely happy. — I am aware that in this hypocritical country, where vice is only tolerated so long as it wears the mask of virtue, Léontine and I shall have our way to fight. But I shall think it hard if the first antagonist to be overcome, is my favourite brother.”

Philip was silenced. — Already, on his introduction to Percy and Selina, Lord Askham had expressed in blunt but cordial English

his hope, that so long as he lived, his brother and brother's family would consider his house their home;—and with such an example of fraternal warmth, it was impossible to do otherwise than resign himself to the evil now inevitable. Still, the singing in his ears,—the sickness of his heart,—attested the greatness of the shock he had sustained.

Luckily, they had reached Sablonière's; where, on ascending the stairs together, a tremendous racket in one of the rooms, seemed familiar to the ears of Lord Askham;—for he instantly opened the door, and announced his brother.

The happy family which, according to his own account, had afforded so much consolation to his banishment, consisted of three uncouth girls, with coffee-coloured complexions and staring black eyes; and a boy so inveterately pugnosed, that you looked aside lest by mistake you should see into his head; who, though but four years old, was already in dress and gesture, a miniature man.—And though the name of Philip had been bestowed on *him* with a degree of brotherly yearning certainly more disinterested than that which had presided over the baptism of poor Percy, the horror-struck Carltonian contemplated his ludicrous namesake with feelings grievously akin to those of the uncle of Robin Redbreast's famous *protégés*!—A more mongrel race had never provoked his disgust than his nephew and nieces!—

He had not, however, seen the worst of the family. The table was laid for dinner,—including the covers of the four little monsters; and though, soon after Lord Askham's desire to Ernestine that her mother might be apprised of his return, a shrill voice from an inner bed-room, upbraided him fiercely with having kept dinner waiting,—he was scarcely prepared for the dragon-like female who burst into the room, exclaiming—“*Ah ça, Hascamp!—décidément dînons-nous aujourd'hui?*”

The next moment, however, he decided her ladyship's dictatorial *brusquerie* to be preferable to the instantaneous dropping of her voice into the blandest accents of *câlinerie*;—reminding him only too forcibly of her original vocation, as *soubrette* to a theatre of the Boulevards!

Nothing could be more marked than the difference of costume existing at that moment between even the better classes of England and France. But in a woman like Milédi Hascamp, exaggerated in colour, stature, voice, and vestment,—the effect produced by such shortness of waist and petticoats, and towering height of bonnet, was that of a caricature.—Even before the first five minutes' conversation betrayed her innate vulgarity of nature, Philip had hardly patience to look at her; and when she spat audibly into her pocket-handkerchief and addressed the heir of all the Askhams as “*mon petit chou*,”—not even Lady Lynchmore herself could have shrunk more loathingly from a woman so v——r.

Afraid, perhaps, to favour Philip so soon in their acquaintance with a specimen of conjugal termagancy, her animadversions were for the present vented on an absent individual whom she reviled under the name of "Vake."

"We left Wegg behind at Dover, to put our baggage through the Custom-house,"—added Lord Askham, by way of explanation; from which, Philip implied that "Vake" must be his brother's valet.—The little monster, coated and cravatted like a lawyer's clerk, soon interposed, however, a shrill apostrophe to "Pappah!"—to inquire whether "Vake" would not arrive by dinner-time.

"*N'est-ce pas que c'est bien mal à Vêke de flâner comme ça en route ?*"—whined Monsieur Philippe; while his lady-like mother added aside to Philip, with a smile of deprecation,—"*C'est que ce petit morveux ne peut rien sans Vêke !*"

For that time, Philip escaped without further enlightenment.—But the morrow brought before him a far more offensive member of his new family than the coffee-coloured girls or parti-coloured mother; in the shape of a half-pay captain of marines, a fellow prisoner of Lord Askham, who at present officiated as the MacMahon of his household; without whose aid, neither father, mother, nor children seemed able to eat, drink, or understand.—"Vake" was incessantly in request, and seldom found wanting; and by the time Philip Askham had cast his eyes over the outward man of a species of half-bred English tiger, occasionally to be seen in the Quadrant, or among the chevaliers d'industrie of foreign watering places, but at that period unknown in England, he was willing to admit that, by comparison, his brother had almost the air of a man of fashion!—

It is scarcely to be wondered at, that the first exclamation of Philip Askham on extricating himself from this terrible family party, on quitting the hotel, should very much resemble that of the convicted Lucio.

This may prove worse than hanging!

There was not in fact a point of the whole business,—there was not a single glimmer in his own destinies,—to which he could turn for consolation!—He, the most envied, the most fashionable of the idlers of the *beau monde* where idleness is a profession, discovered himself at a glance to be the most friendless and helpless of human beings!

Having reached the confines of St. James's Street in the unsavoury vehicle in which on quitting Leicester Square he was glad to conceal his mortification,—he espied Lord Middlemore emerging from the Cocoa Tree, and instantly quitted the coach to join him. It was a comfort to chance upon some one really interested in poor Percy, to whom he could confide his vexation.

"By George, what a bore!—and I, who was looking forward

with such delight to his return!"—cried the astonished cousin. 'But one might have expected it.—Percy is a fellow who's been standing in his own light ever since he was born!—If Percy had been made Pope, he'd have hampered the lock of the gates of Paradise with St. Peter's keys!"

To Philip's share of the annoyance, however, he reconciled himself readily; for like all egotists, Philip had but a shallow hold on the sympathies of others.

"So confoundedly annoying," resumed Middlemore, turning a deaf ear to his account of Milédi Hasscamp's coal-black locks, and coal-red cheeks,—“to happen just at the moment every Englishman in the land is wanting to enjoy himself!—I've been so merry all day, that I could hardly help shaking hands with every soul I ever saw before, and even those I had not;—and giving every beggar I met, a shilling to drink.—There's something in the word “PEACE” that gets into one's head!—And to be shown up in this way, by having Percy bring down upon one a pack of disreputable adventurers!—By George, I've a mind to accept the proposal Hardyngge made me last night, to carry off our two wives to Paris, and let them see the Louvre and all that's worth seeing, before the general scramble, that will be sure to take place,—if only to be out of the way.”

Even Hardyngge and Emma, though they looked this mortifying family catastrophe more steadily in the face, had no better comfort to afford.—The glory of the House of Askham was indeed departed!—

“Still, it is not for *you* to turn your back on him,” observed Hardyngge,—after listening to Philip's vivid description of their new sister-in-law.—“There is a lower deep than poor Lord Askham has yet fallen into.—The *complaisant* appears to me as great an evil as the wife;—and if we all abandon him, there is no saying into what society he may fall!”—

He even agreed to accompany Philip to Sablonière's the following day, to be introduced.—But when, on their arrival, they found Henry beforehand with them, on the best of terms with the coffee-coloured girls, the little mannikin, and even “Vake,”—the good intentions of Lord Hardyngge underwent some modification.—The policy of Lord Uppingham's jackal was plainly apparent,—and the Toryism of poor Percy already exuding from every pore.—He made no secret indeed of his recantation in favour of the angelic government which had loosed his chains;—and on quitting the hotel, the Eske Hill brother-in-law offered to bet with the Hurstwood cousin, that Henry would persuade Lord Askham to assume, on the first dissolution of parliament, the representation of his own borough.

“Henry is the sort of fellow,” said he, “who, an hour before Strafford was beheaded, would have made a dead point at his proxy.”

“By George, then, I hope the Regent will let this parliament die a natural death!” observed Lord Middlemore; “for unless I’m much mistaken, Edenbourne is the only thing that keeps Philip out of the Bench.—I’m afraid poor Philip is deucedly dipped.”—

“Unless Henry, or ‘Vake,’ or the lady in the chimney-pot hat should interfere to prevent it, I dare say Lord Askham will pay his debts.—He forced Philip up to London, you know, by sending him to parliament; and though his taste in a wife may be none of the purest, he talks like a generous, warm-hearted fellow after all!”

“Lucky that Percy made up his mind to be off to Eden Castle at once!”—added Middlemore.—“Though people are too busy with the state of the nation to take much heed just now of A or B,—better have those little quadroons of his turned out in his own park, than in Hyde.—A deuce of a nuisance for all of us, the whole thing!—But by the time we come back from Paris, my dear Hardyng, we shall find the physic settled, and the sediment sunk to the bottom!”—

CHAPTER XXX.

I do fear
When every feather sticks in its own wing,
Lord Timon will be left a naked gull,
Which flashes now a phoenix.

SHAKSPEARE.

O had thy grandsire, with a prophet’s eye,
Seen how his son’s son would destroy his sons,
From forth thy reach he would have laid thy shame!—
Why, if thou wert the regent of the world,
It were a shame to let this land by lease;
But, for thy worlds enjoying but this land,
Is it not more than shame to shame it so?—
Landlord of “Eden” wert thou,—and not king!—

SHAKSPEARE.

Though the various members of the Askham family evinced so little predilection for London, that Emma and Susan and their two lords were among the first who had the gratification of beholding in his triumphant position in the humbled capital of France, the great captain with whose name its nurses were beginning to frighten refractory children, as formerly with that of Marlbrook,—while Lord Askham was already surveying with horror round Eden Castle the naked slopes and craggy acclivities he remembered clothed with thriving oaks and stately elms,—all England with one accord was crowding thither, to stare at the Allied sovereigns;—who, by associating the valour of their camps, and the gold of their currency, had prevailed against the “Corsican blackguard” with much the same valour of heroism which enables a field of

hundreds of well-mounted sportsmen,—fifty couple of staunch hounds, and huntsmen and helpers in proportion,—to effect the suppression of poor little reynard. —

The same unaccountable burst of affection which escorted Louis XVIII. from Hartwell to the coast, after totally overlooking his existence for several years preceding, seemed to attract the British nation to the metropolis, for a sight of those crowned and laurelled heads,—each of which had been in close alliance with Napoleon, and danced attendance in his anteroom of kings, so long as the magnetic fluid of victory hovered around the oriflamme of France!”

In the optimism of an hour so triumphant, among the many things that the country called upon itself to be thankful for, was that the Regent should have selected, among those officiating as royal bear-leaders, a man so skilled to do credit to the office as the honourable member for Edenbourne. It was whispered at Watier's that he was recommended for the charge by Madame Lieven; at White's, that he had made a conquest of the Duchess of Oldenburg, who courted him as the favourite of the Prince, with whom she was ambitious of becoming a favourite; and no one chose to remember the self-evident fact, that the Sir Askham, already honoured by the favour of their *Kaiserliche* and *Königliche* majesties, was naturally the fittest person for their service.—It was Lady Grandison, therefore, who, by her eagerness to remove him from England, had laid the foundation of his advancement.

But while the gay world was thanking goodness for its power of providing a noble *valet de placé*, whose French was as good as Horace Trevor's, and his bow as graceful as Sir Walter Lesly's, while his name bore citation in the Ratisbon College and was secure against an Uppingham blackball,—Philip Askham, but that his office afforded a pretext for not accompanying his brother to Eden Castle, would have scarcely found courage to wear with a smile, the mantle of state under which the fox was gnawing.

It was a trial of patience to one whose detestation of noise was avouched by his early persecutions of little Edward Saville, to be beset, whichever way he turned, by the shouts of the thousands upon thousands who so exercised their lungs in favour of the illustrious strangers,

That the Thames trembled underneath her banks
To hear the replication of their cries
Made by her concave shores;

and though the human face divine may be a pleasant study, yet when, twelve hours out of the twenty-four, your eyes are beset by a sea of human faces, “thick as the leaves in Vallombrosa,” all wearing the same open-eyed, open-mouthed expression of vulgar wonderment, the sight is somewhat surfeiting,—even when the “inward eye, which is the bliss of solitude” and solace of crowds,

has something better to turn to by way of refuge, than the contemplation of ruin and despair.—Yet of two evils,—the besetment of that clamorous mob was less annoying, than the still small voice of conscience, with its eternal balance of accounts,—its sum total of debts to be paid, and sins to be repented.

And though circumstances scarcely admitted on such an occasion of the pleasing delusions of the fly on the wheel, Philip had no small reason to believe that, among the hundreds of thousands whose eyes were attracted to the brilliant *cortège* of the sight-seeing Emperor, the fairer thousands assigned the preference, in point of manly beauty, to one whose person and costume were less at variance with their stereotyped notions of distinction;—and in those brilliant fêtes, where the Lady Grandisons, and Lady Lynchmores allowed no respite to the crowned heads and hearts, (widowers *pro tem*,) from their coquetish advances, hearts less ambitious, and looks less designing, were very much at the service of the leader of the Imperial Ursa Major.—But that his purple and fine linen were lined with a hair shirt, he would have had a pleasant time of it! The Regent who, though his reputation for a discriminating taste was somewhat deteriorated by his pretence at juvenility, (for as Cicero said of one of his friends, *idem manebat, neque idem decebat*,) was still an admirable judge of tact and taste in other people,—regarded Philip almost as an authority.

White's and Watier's, on the other hand, were too busy in committee for the arrangement of their fêtes in honour of the Peace, to make mockery of the deep obeisances he had learned, in his foreign apprenticeship, to translate into Slavonic. The Hinton Horts were engrossed with tales of tickets canvassed for in vain, or stories of diamonds begged, borrowed, or stolen, to do honour (!) to the royal entertainments;—while Horace Trevor and Lesly visited upon the Prince Regent the partiality he had presumed to show to Lord Uppingham's brother-in-law, by the most caustic comparison of his *pékin* horsemanship with that of the royal warriors, who, for years past, had lived in the saddle!—And amid all this huzza-ing of mobs,—this ha-ha-ing of trumpets,—this trampling of guards,—this prattling of fools,—what leisure for any one to note that the De Bayhursts were spending the summer in the country, and the Middlemores and Hardynges at Paris?—At any moment of a London season, the place left vacant is instantly filled up;—but on such an occasion as the present, the sudden disappearance of a moral Daniel Lambert, or of any half-dozen Dukes, exclusive of him of Wellington,—would not have occasioned a vacancy.—

As to “Lord and Lady Askham and family,”—things were they of such small account, that their departure for Eden Castle was unnoticed even by the lord-loving Morning Post!—

In the pauses of the graceful courtiership which subdued, as by a surface of oil of roses, the billows raging in his soul, it occurred

to Philip Askham as more than possible, that a marriage contracted by his brother under circumstances so peculiar, might be wanting in the indispensable forms; and in hopes of obtaining such information as might enable him at some future period to substantiate the heirship of his son, he applied to his friend Hardyng, to employ some legal agent in Paris, to proceed to Verdun in order to ascertain the necessary particulars.—His experience in the Bayhurst affair rendered him somewhat sensitive to the importance of marriage certificates.—

The reply of his brother-in-law proved chiefly that the original Bob was father to the present Lord Hardyng.

“Nothing would be easier, my dear Askham, than to execute your commission,” said he; “and I enclose you with that view the address of a clever *avoué*, with whose house my poor father transacted business to his satisfaction, on our first visit to Paris. But if you will permit me to advise in a matter so delicate, I recommend you to forbear.—Lord Askham has been an imprudent man, but the best of brothers; and here, as elsewhere, is cited as having the heart of a prince.—Do not act with him, therefore, in an underhand manner; for he does not deserve it. At some future moment, set your doubts at rest by ascertaining from himself the points you deem essential. But do not employ a lawyer to seek out flaws; for, were I in his position and so dealt with, I could never forgive you.

“I wish you would give me pleasanter commissions, that I might execute them more to your satisfaction and mine.—You can imagine nothing more amusing than the scene presented by this motley capital, (which between its tears and laughter, is in a constant state of hysterics,) unless indeed the mummeries into which poor dear old sober-suited London seems at this moment to be betrayed!—Do you remember once at Eden Castle, when little Saville dressed up your old mastiff in some cast-off finery, the curious figure cut by the venerable beast,—now, gambolling in its strange accoutrements,—now, stopping short to utter a surly growl, as if ashamed to find itself merrymaking!—

“Middlemore and I are proud of our sagacity in having withdrawn our wives from a scene of action where the proverbial prudence of English matronhood seem to have laid down its arms. We expect to find, on our return, the Holy Roman Eagle emblazoned in the Grandison arms; and the door-steps of poor Lynchmore’s mansion paved with malachite and turquoises.—On this latter point, however, we keep our own counsel; Delvyn being our constant companion,—amazingly improved, and one of the finest young fellows I ever saw. His exploits at Dresden obtained him from the Emperor the order of St. Anne;—and if it suited him to make the army his profession, which just on the proclamation of a peace (which God send to be permanent,) seems scarcely worth while,—I suspect we should hear news of him.—As it is, he spends his

mornings with us at the Louvre, or in the Bois; and his evenings with us in listening to Talma and Mlle. Mars; laughing at our intoxication as little as is compatible with the wild blood of one-and-twenty, when we get drunk with Domenichino or Corneille, as others with Maraschino or Clos de Vougeot.

“The Champ de Mars, with all its dust and drumming, I leave to him and Midd:—and according to *their* account, you must make haste and claim your Conquering Hero, or not a feather of him will be left unplucked by certain English belles who are playing the jay with a vengeance. Our legions must not have to cry like Canidius—

our leader's led,
And we are women's men!—

“My wife had a dear little letter from Selina yesterday, with a flourishing account of your boy;—so that we have no questions to ask. Did not a very sacred duty call me to London in August, I fear I should hardly resist the proposal of the Middlemores to proceed at once to Italy, before the excitement which has infused quicksilver into the veins of Europe, subsides into its customary lethargy. *Reste à savoir*, whether the infusion have so renovated the patient, as to render further torpor impossible.

“And now, good-bye. The Frères Provençaux are extending their arms, dyed in Hermitage, to embrace your two brothers-in-law; who, nevertheless remain with their wives, fasting or feasting, ever yours fraternally.”

Accustomed to mistrust the counsel of others regarding his selfish interests, Philip profited by the address forwarded by Lord Hardyng, to employ a legal practitioner in the office from which his brother-in-law recoiled; and having issued his commission, which it would require some weeks to accomplish, gave himself up with better spirits to the frenzy of the hour. The Askham succession was not yet impossible;—and by Sir Hugh de Bayhurst's judicious sojourn in the country, he was at once relieved from the importunities of a jealous and repining woman; and his house from the annoying intrusions of the saturnine uncle of Selina.

Though not a syllable of explanation had transpired between himself and Lady Grandison, there was an air of triumphant significance in her mode of answering, whenever, at the dinner parties which so often united them, he made formal inquiries after her daughter, that “all was well at Bayhurst, where Stasy enjoyed herself so much, that not even the visit of the allied sovereigns would attract her to town!”

But Lady Grandison was too much interested in conciliating the individual officiating as janitor of the Imperial presence,—without whose cognizance not even a note could be insinuated into the hand of Cæsar,—to utter a syllable at which his susceptibility could take umbrage. So many were the occasions, moreover, in that queen-

less court, (where the youth of the Princess Charlotte prevented her assuming even the limited authority likely to be spared her by the Prince Regent,) in which the first honours after those of the royal family were assigned to the Marchioness of Uppingham, that the Askham family were secure of deference and conciliation from the politic leader of the exclusives.

To this source of advancement, indeed, Philip himself was covertly directing his aspirations. In a wreck of fortune so total as his own, a man of *his* nature does not disdain to keep afloat, even by clinging to a hencoop; and if nothing else remained for succour, place was a spar to which he might again be lashed, rather than go to the bottom.—The honours of political martyrdom would be an impertinent ambition on the part of one so obscure;—his stand on the ladder of public life being on so low a round, that his head was not perceptible above the throng.—Nay, there was every excuse for his changing sides; since the Regent himself was the leader of his desertion, and the patron of his borough, a convert upon honest conviction. Unless by the manly indignation of Lord Hardyng, or the jealous sneers of his brother Henry snarling currishly over his loaves and fishes, no chance of his being reviled for apostacy!—

Never, therefore, did his public duties bring him into contact with Lord Uppingham, without his attempting to thaw the mass of ice that disunited them, which he hoped in time to render a confluent stream.—For while the powerful eye of the Marquis comprehended at that moment the politics of all Europe within its horizon, his brother-in-law saw nothing in this world beyond the gloomy shadow projected before him by his single Self, now that every step he made receded further from his setting sun!—

One day—the one preceding the departure of the allied sovereigns for Portsmouth to witness that peculiarly English exercise of warlike skill,—a naval review,—two letters were placed at the same moment in the hands of Philip; either of which might have sufficed to account for the cloud overspreading his handsome face, as he soon afterwards proceeded to Escudier's for the discharge of his daily duties. Though, in answer to the more than gracious inquiries of the Duchess of Oldenburg after his health, he ascribed his apparent indisposition (and with truth) to headache arising from impending thunder storms, the electric fluid he apprehended was engendered at two points as widely apart as Bayhurst and Eden Castle!—

For of the two ominous letters, one was in Lady Anastasia's handwriting,—the other, in that of Lord Askham.—Need it be added, to those acquainted with Philip Askham, to *which* he assigned precedence of attention?—

For an explosion of wrath on the part of his brother, he was fully prepared, since a large portion of his indiscretions must have by this time transpired;—and often, when contemplating with

disgust the probability of Miladi Hasscamp's assumptions of proprietorship over the personalities there had been as yet no opportunity of claiming, and the innovations of "Vake"—to the extent perhaps of riding his horses and ruining the mouth of Black Muley of Meltonian renown,—he shuddered at the notion of Percy's displeasure on finding how his tenants had been screwed up, and how low the discipline of the estate let down.—Instead of devoting to the improvement of the property the provision set apart by William Lord Askham for the purpose, Philip had in fact taken care to appropriate every guinea to his personal enjoyment.

There was something, however, in the tone of Percy's letter, more humiliating than crude reprehension.—He spoke of the security in which he had always indulged that his property, and the property of his children, was in the safest possible keeping in the hands of a brother so dear to him; and of his heartfelt vexation on finding, not only their interests sacrificed, but many of his father's favourite tenants,—many whose forefathers had been the favourite tenants of his ancestors,—driven from the estate, often to its injury as well as their own ruin!—It was not, he said, a few trashy modern improvements in the house or gardens, that could reconcile him to the idea of these people being driven from their homes,—to lay their gray heads, at last, in some other churchyard than Edenbourne.—There was a nephew of old Knowles of the lodge, (to whom the early affections of Lord Askham had been attracted in his capacity of warrener,) who had not only been ejected from a small farm procured for him of the old lord at Percy's intercession, but his goods distrained and his family thrown upon the parish!—As in all despotic governments, severity had been practised against the weak, as a warning to the strong; and if the far-famed breed of Eden venison had lost nothing of its renown, the Eden tenants had lost not only their credit for prosperity, but their former loyalty to the lords of the soil.

"It was my intention on arriving in England, my dear Philip," wrote Lord Askham, "to assign for one year to your use, the provision of which, for the last six, you have been in enjoyment;—knowing that the sudden suspension of an income, like the sudden stop of a horse, is apt to fling a man head over ears to the ground. But as I find the estate already in advance to you to the enormous amount of 8,700*l.*, I cannot, in justice to my children, make any further concession.—The allowance of five hundred a year I purpose to make you, must, on the contrary, be kept back till the surplus of the five thousand be covered.—For alas! between my own imprudence and the mismanagement of the property, I find my affairs in a ruinous condition!—The entail renders it indispensable to lay by all in my power, as a provision for my three girls, who would otherwise be destitute; and Wegg, who is an incomparable man of business, and has gone carefully through the accounts from

the period of my father's death, with the Edenbourne auditor, has clearly proved that, with the strictest economy, and regardless of all provision for the girls, the estate will scarcely be clear by the time Philip comes of age!—This is a grievous consideration, for one who has been so long looking forward to spending his latter years in comfort, under the shade of his own fig-tree!—

“The large amount of personal property I find here belonging to you, renders it necessary for me to inquire in what manner you wish it disposed of:—your hunters, for instance,—for which Wegg assures me you would obtain a high price in town,—and which I cannot offer to take off your hands, not being able to afford a hunting establishment.—There are also many objects belonging to your son and Miss de Bayhurst, with which my young ones might make more free than welcome, if long left at their discretion.”—

“A regular warning off the premises!—Bag and baggage—cast out of doors!” was the savage commentary of Philip, as he thrust the letter into his pocket and proceeded to open that of Lady Anastasia; and that delicate handwriting, the very sight of which *once* caused every pulse in his frame to vibrate, he now regarded much as a prisoner under sentence of death might contemplate the writing of the sheriff!—

His repugnance arose, however, from presentiments founded on sad experience of the style of letter as sure to emanate from a last year's love, as on certain trees, the withered hews of the preceding season to maintain a persistent hold, in spite of the new leaves and new roses budding in mockery around them.—As a *roué* by profession, he was only too well read in the dialectics of such compositions!—“You *found* me innocent!”—“The reproaches of an unquiet conscience,”—“The accusing eye of an injured husband,”—“The home your desertion has made miserable;”—were phrases as familiar to his eye, as to the ear of parliament the used-up classicities of Sir Robert Peel!—Like a somnambulist in a state of *clairvoyance*, he fancied he could read with his eyes shut the letter of Lady Anastasia de Bayhurst.

He was mistaken.—She knew him too well to appeal to his feelings.—His iron ferule had been too often used in correcting the ebullitions of her fond eloquence; for the sea alone returns to break in moaning surges at Even, against the rock which in the light of Morning repelled its tide.—She wrote, not to complain or to implore,—but to threaten!—

Weary of her life, unequal longer to contend against perpetual terrors of discovery and the dark hints of vengeance which his recent discoveries had wrung from her husband's lips, she was resolved to bring her fate to a crisis.—

“De Bayhurst knows or surmises all!”—wrote the unfortunate young woman; “and live here with his angry eye for ever upon me, I neither can nor will.—But I have no other home, Philip,

unless with *you*.—On that point, my mother has signified her cruel determination;—and on you alone have I a claim for shelter.—I know the sacrifice I impose on you.—I am aware what it will be to have such a cast-away for your inmate.—But you have brought it on yourself.—From *you* the fault,—on *you* must fall the retribution!”—

“That accursed poetry of Byron’s has turned all their heads!”—cried Philip,—(about to destroy the letter,—then, recalling to mind the famous De Roos-ian axiom—“never write,—never burn!”—placing it carefully in the secret drawer of his desk, as evidence of the malice-prepeuse nature of his correspondent’s unencouraged proceedings.—) What folly,—what selfishness,—when I have clearly proved to her that I have no longer the means of maintenance even for myself!—Aware, too, that I am legally pledged to the guardianship of Selina,—to have *her* residing under the same roof with whom, would be an outrage to all decency!—If she is unhappy with De Bayhurst,—(to whom, as far as *I* ever saw of their domestic life, her whims and wishes are a law,)—the Grandisons—by whom the match was made, cannot refuse her a refuge.—At present, he can *prove* nothing, and she is sure of a separate maintenance; whereas by throwing herself on *my* protection, she renders a divorce inevitable, and completes my ruin as well as her own by an award of damages that would throw me into the King’s Bench for life!”—

This consideration, which, even in those unamended days of Prison Discipline, was sufficiently appalling, instigated a suggestion, which, though at first repulsed as unworthy, was soon calmly welcomed back by one accustomed to cover with the varnished mask of expediency, the revolting features of many a heinous act.—

Over De Bayhurst,—over the man who possessed the horrible power of driving Lady Anastasia to desperation, and consequently himself to ruin,—*he* possessed the power of life and death.—One word from *him* to Lord Llandore, and the vital question of the heirship would lie at the mercy of the law!—At all events, the mere threat must at any moment compel the brutal husband to forbearance.—

Had Philip Askham, (by whom the influence of principle had long been shuffled off in the fashionable throng where ties of any kind that *can* be dispensed with are voted an incumbrance,)—remained in habits of brotherly intercourse with his excellent sisters,—with the high-minded Lord Uppingham,—the noble-hearted Hardyng, or even that rough diamond Lord Middlemore,—or had he so much as accustomed himself to the humdrum decencies of Mansfield Street including the Tartuffism of Henry and his wife,—a project of this contemptible nature would have startled him as much as an act of burglary.—

But he lived chiefly in a world where

The pleasure is as great
In being cheated as to cheat;—

and in such a circle, the notion of out-diplomatizing an injured husband would be hailed with as much applause, as in the hollow world of profligacy described by Cibber or Vanbrugh. The stroke of Machiavelism he contemplated was indeed worthy the disciple of Hertford House!—

No time must be lost in accomplishing his purpose; for at any moment, Lady Anastasia might rush upon her destruction and *his*. Yet it required some deliberation to decide upon the safest means of signifying to De Bayhurst his flagitious intention, without risking to be crushed on the spot, if in person, or by legal process, if by a threatening letter.—

Had such a project occurred to him at Eden Castle, he might perhaps have shrunk under the gaze of his noble ancestors contemplating him from the surrounding walls; or in the house of God, at Edenbourne, a single glance towards its monuments, the glory of his race, might have inspired sentiments in better accordance with their nobleness. But as it was, his eyes wandered from the files of unpaid bills upon his writing-table, to the tawdry decorations of the ready-furnished “town mansion” so much beyond his means;—till he inwardly reviled, *not* the fatal extravagance whose disagreeable consequences stared him in the face, but *her* whom he regarded as its origin.—But for the ambition of shining in the eyes of Lady Anastasia, at the period when she was the bright particular star to which all his wishes and aspirings were addressed, these follies had never been!—

This ingenious version of his difficulties hardened his heart to express in the plainest terms to the woman who thus threw herself on his mercy, that, so far from having a home to offer her, he was himself on the eve of becoming homeless.—

“If you find your situation intolerable,” wrote he,—“come straight to your house in Grosvenor Square, from whence I will enable you to dictate terms to your oppressor.—Leave home as for a morning drive, so as to excite no suspicion;—at Lamberhurst, take post-horses; and before your intentions are suspected, you will be out of reach.”—

“After all, my plans will probably fall to the ground for want of promptitude and energy on *her* part!” mused Philip, when (under cover to a servant) the letter was despatched.—“Women can be rash,—but never resolute; and she, above all, is helpless and inert as a child!”—

Such was his mode of qualifying the devotion with which she studied his inclinations; and the broken-spirited humbleness with which, ever since she had a weight upon her conscience, she had deferred to every caprice of the husband towards whom, so long as she was blameless, she maintained the utmost dignity of self-respect!—

To enable himself to meet the possibility of Lady Anastasia’s ac-

quiescence, he had, however, still a disagreeable task to accomplish:—an explanation with Selina!—For some time past, indeed, the peremptory nature of his occupations had taken him so much from home, that they rarely met; and for the last year,—ever since her illness and removal to Bayhurst,—a degree of reserve had established itself between them which rendered it easier for him to utter the ungracious intimation he was now meditating.—

“May I take Percy with me?”—she inquired of Mrs. Markham, when summoned to the presence of her stepfather.—“It is nearly a week since the poor little fellow saw his papa!”—

But she was judiciously reminded by the governess that Mr. Askham desired to speak to her *alone*.—

His intended explanation was, in fact, such as it would have been difficult to entrust to any other ears than those of Selina; whose trustworthiness was a point so thoroughly established, that he had no hesitation in committing his secrets to her keeping.—She was at once above all missish curiosity and girlish indiscretion.—

“Ruined?—about to break up your establishment!”—faltered she, in horror-struck consternation,—after Philip, with sufficient circumlocution, had placed his situation before her.—“And *I*, who have been such a burthen to you,—such a wretched incumbrance!”—

“You well know, my dear Selina,” rejoined he, a little touched by the genuineness of her tears, “what satisfaction I have experienced in granting you a home—All I regret is, that, being now reduced to the interest of my paternal fortune of five thousand pounds, (which, being luckily settled on the children of my marriage, is untouched,) it will be out of my power to continue the advantage afforded.”—

“But surely,” replied Selina, with deep blushes glowing through her tears,—“surely, if your fortunes be thus reduced, by adding *my* income, small as it is, to your own, we might still remain together?—You have no idea how frugal and how industrious I could be!—The humbler your establishment, the better assistance I could render.—I am an excellent workwoman.—To Percy, I could supply the place of nurse or governess.—He is quite my child—He obeys *me* better than either Susan or Mrs. Markham.—Only try me—and you will find that, instead of the burthen I have been, I shall become as useful as a servant.”—

“Heaven forbid,” said Philip, with a smile purporting to be beneficent,—“that I should ungenerously profit by your mistaken kindness, to throw you of your appropriate sphere. You are arrived at a time of life, Selina, when the position you take in society becomes of vital importance; and it affords me the greatest consolation, in the midst of my own ruin, to know that you have such a home awaiting you as the house of Sir Hugh de Bayhurst.”

“Reside with *my uncle!*”—murmured Selina, her tears suddenly ceasing, with the greatness of the shock.

“With respect to Percy,”—added Philip,—taking advantage of her consternation,—“your kind intentions would have been superfluous,—for it is my intention to place him instantly at school.”

“You cannot be so cruel!”—cried Selina,—immediately recovering herself. “So delicate as he is, the most unceasing care and watchfulness have alone kept him alive. He is but six years old,—an age at which even healthy children are seldom sent from home.—But Percy, who is accustomed to the tenderness usually bestowed on girls—”

“The more reason that there should be a speedy change of system!” was the harsh rejoinder of her stepfather.—“His prospects are no longer what they were.—And as he will have to scramble through life as a poor man’s child, it is time he should qualify himself for his altered fortunes.—I am now about to intimate to Mrs. Markham and Susan, that I dispense with their services. At the conclusion of the session, this house will be given up, and I shall immediately go abroad.”—

“But I always understood,”—faltered Selina, clinging to the last hope of being able to reprieve the poor little boy from what she considered his sentence of death,—“I always understood from Mr. Moran that, having signed a formal acceptance of my guardianship, it was not in your power to transfer it to my uncle?”—

“*That* your friend, Mr. Moran, shall shortly *see!*”—cried Philip, enraged at what he considered a hostile demonstration.—“But even were such the case, nothing can compel me to retain you under my roof; and if you oppose my desire to place you in a situation so advantageous to yourself and so every way suitable, as your uncle’s house, I shall simply place you at school.—Consult the advisers on whose judgment you depend rather than upon mine.—Go and gossip with your old nurse,—or even send, if you will, for the officious Mr. Moran.—But the sooner your election is made, the better.—The state of my affairs does not admit of deferring to a young lady’s caprices.”—

Accepting this bitter rejoinder as it was intended, as a sentence of dismissal, poor Selina withdrew to chew the cud of her cares;—leaving Philip Askham to vent new invectives against the obstinacy and selfishness of the sex.—Regardless of Selina’s generous offers, he even denounced her as heartless and ungrateful; simply because she unwittingly opposed an obstacle to his negotiations with the irate husband of Lady Anastasia de Bayhurst!—

As he was quitting the room to proceed to Escudier’s for the day’s duty, his eyes accidentally rested on the angle of old Lady Middlemore’s balcony, facetiously pointed out to him as “dangerous” the preceding year, by her son; and a sigh nearly resembling a groan burst from his lips, as it occurred to him that his

broken fortunes might be reduced to Helen Middlemore at last!—Twenty thousand pounds down, and in prospect the savings of the stingiest and best jointured dowager in England, appeared riches to him *now*!—

But, alas! in spite of her four-and-thirty years of spinsterhood, and the nose that had robbed her cheeks of their bloom, what chance that even Helen would accept the once courted cousin, whose elder brother had become the father of a family by going round by Toulouse!—

CHAPTER XXXI.

Those who, as Tully says of Pompey, are *sui amantes sine rivali*, are many times unfortunate. For whereas they have all their time sacrificed to themselves, they become in the end sacrifices to the inconstancy of Fortune; whose wings they thought, by their self-wisdom, to have pinioned.

BACON.

Lachrymæque decoræ,
Gratior et pulchro veniens in corpore virtus.

VIRGIL.

It afforded some comfort to Selina that Mr. Askham's peevish advice to her to "consult her friends," left her plenary liberty of conscience to address herself to those who might afford aid as well as counsel.

Her first measure was a letter to Moran, the man of business, originally recommended to her mother by Sir Erasmus l'Estrange, who was in habits of constant communication with the eccentric recluse; placing her position before him, and inquiring whether, in the event of success in altering the intentions of her stepfather with regard to her delicate little brother, and obtaining the care of him during Mr. Askham's temporary absence, that kind old friend, who had desired her to apply for his assistance in all the exigencies of life, would forward the desire of her poor mother on the subject, by allowing them the use of Eastfield as a residence?—

"I possess the same means which *she* found adequate when residing there," wrote Miss de Bayhurst; "and under *that* roof, I should feel that there was a blessing on my endeavours to accomplish her last wishes."—

After despatching this letter, to which the anxious Mrs. Markham offered no opposition, she profited by the departure of Philip on the Portsmouth expedition to hasten, accompanied by Percy whom she now scarcely liked to trust out of her sight, to Uppingham House.—The influential position of the Marchioness gave her great influence over her brother;—and even if unable to engage her mediation, the kindness of Lady Uppingham's nature would

afford balm to her wounded feelings, as well as counsel for her better guidance.—

“What is the meaning of that little asking face, dearest Selina?” said the Marchioness, whom she found in close conference with the young Duchess of Norcliffe, concerning certain innovations of precedence attempted by Lady Grandison, under sanction of imperial partiality; against a recurrence of which, the great ladies were uniting in phalanx.—

But a second glance at the red eyes of her young friend convinced her that she must wait till they were alone to learn the motive of her visit; nor was it till the Duchess departed, and Percy was consigned to the nursery with his uproarious cousin, Lord Rosneath, that Margaret gently drew towards her the young girl whose heart was evidently charged with sorrow; and, by the kindest interrogations, extracted the story of her troubles.—

“Become the inmate of Lady Anastasia?”—she exclaimed. “Philip does not *think* of it!—I was afraid, poor fellow, that he would be forced by his brother’s return to make great changes in his establishment. But surely some other arrangement might be made!”—

Without surmising the reasons that rendered Lady Uppingham so susceptible to the disadvantage of a residence with Lady Anastasia, Selina proceeded to entrust to her, in sacred confidence, the deathbed promise exacted by her mother that nothing should separate her from poor little Percy; and the injunctions contained in the testamentary letter remitted to her the preceding year, that, in spite of all his professions of tenderness, she should withhold her confidence from her uncle.—For Evelyn had gone to her grave with the conviction that the man by whom she had been outraged would, sooner or later, revenge himself by persecution of her daughter,—in pursuance of the old proverb that “*Chi offende non perdona mai!*”

Accepting these maternal instructions as a fortunate substitute for the stille greater objections which could not be communicated to Selina, Lady Uppingham promised to do her best in advancing her cause with Philip.

“Do not thank me, my poor child,” said she, folding her young friend affectionately in her arms,—“for it is far from certain that, in the embarrassed state of his circumstances, my arguments may prevail. But wherever or however you may be situated, you will always command the best services and warm affections of my sisters and myself.—We love you dearly, both for your own sake and your mother’s:—yet scarcely so much, Selina, as so devoted a daughter and sister, deserves to be loved.”—

As the departure of the Emperor was to take place in a day or two, when Philip would be once more at liberty for the adjustment of his private affairs, Margaret was satisfied that she should have

time in the interim to consult Lord Uppingham, without whose sanction not the smallest action of her life was undertaken, concerning the best mode of protecting the interests of the motherless girl.

Meanwhile, by many besides Philip Askham was the departure of the illustrious visitors anticipated as a welcome relief. Three weeks of unceasing uproar, pomp, and pageantry, in the sultriest of weather and dustiest of roads, sufficed to surfeit even the most bigoted worshipper of stars and garters, and regality in all its gradations or degradations. — Experience, which renders fools wise, and

—Populumque falsis dedocet uti
Vocibus,

had convinced the London populace, at it did the Spanish friar, that shouting, like “fasting, is a windy recreation;” — or at all events, like the Irish peasant at a wake, that it was as well to know whom they were howling for. The country, in short, was sick of a surfeit of Kings.

“Thank Heaven! — A right welcome announcement!” muttered Trevor, with a great yawn, pushing over to Sir Walter Lesly the morning paper he had been perusing.

“What! — the proclamation of peace?” demanded the Rosencrantz of the fashionable Guildenstern, turning to an account of that high solemnity contained in the paper. “I wish they had been civil enough to perform the ceremony at an hour when Christians are awake; for as I hope it is the only one that will occur in our time, I should like to have been present?” —

“Confound all ceremonies! — We have had enough of them lately to last out two lifetimes!” retorted Trevor. “The sight of an Exon has become nauseous; and I swear I am as sick of the rainbow variety of ribands, as if serving behind the counter at Harding and Howell’s. No, no! — I was alluding to the announcement that the Emperor and his sister will sail from Dover on the 27th.”

“The day after to-morrow. — Hurrah! One had no notion at first what a *corvée* they would become! To see the Utilitarian Duchess wasting her mornings among power-looms and button-makers, and her evenings in mal-practices against the stony heart of the Regent, was really *impayable*!”

“Poor Askham is as tired of his honours as a Lord Mayor, — as deaf as an artilleryman from the eternal discharge of salutes, — and as bilious as a nabob from being saturated at city banquets — with turtle and lime-punch!”

“Deaf and bilious? — Is *that* all he has to complain of in exchange for his diamond snuffbox? — Why, the poor dear Regent has nearly fallen a victim to drinking with the Emperor, — whose Falernian consists of iced water; — and is said to have dislocated a rib by tight lacing, in order to render his portly dimensions pre-

sentable between two such very thin slices as Prussia and Russia; besides being nearly harassed into a fever by the impertinent encroachments of Grandison House!"

"The worst part of it, however, is to come!" resumed Trevor. "One may judge by the squabbling the other day in the committee at Watier's, what it will be when the national piper comes to be paid. It will be Van's turn, then, to feel bilious and turn a deaf ear!—Old Bull has given himself amazing airs on having kings and emperors feasted at his table. But like the Primrose family after entertaining Squire Thoruhill's servants, we shall be forced to pinch for it, for a twelvemonth! By the way, you don't happen to know whether Norcliffe wants a cook?—I have promised to go to him in September; and Lunardelli is on the pavé!"

"Left Askham?—What a confounded bore!"

"*Qu'importe?*—Phil's dinner days are done! and the kindest thing we can do for ourselves is to place Lunardelli where his genius will do itself (and *us*) justice."

"I was afraid it was all up with him, now his Cain has turned up, and *not* a trump!—Conceive Percy, who was such a famous good fellow at Eton, doing so beastly a thing as to cut out poor Phil by marrying something unmentionable, and bringing over a tribe of horrible children packed, Hinton Hort declares, in a hamper, like a dozen of claret."

"A dozen cogent excuses, I'm afraid, for not paying his brother's debts.—I must give a hint on the subject to Stultz, to whom I was rash enough to recommend Phil Askham."

"No fear of *him*! Phil will manage to keep his head above water!—Phil will get something done for him.—There is a famous opening in Hanover."

"His patroness, Lady Grandison, is just now in the black books at Carlton House, which may chance to keep *him* out of the Red one."

"He is too sharp a fellow not to have friends in either camp," replied Trevor. "And *entre nous*, at the Guildhall dinner, Lady Lynchmore was in prodigious force and prodigious favour."

"*That* is a *liaison* which, with all our powers of endurance, society would never tolerate!" cried Lesly, with an air of indignation.

"On the score of morality?—on account of her family?"—

"Bah!—on account of her *want* of family!—A woman so intrinsically *parvenue* would always be saying, doing, or looking the wrong thing. With the dear Marchioness, we are sure of the only two virtues compatible with her calling, — good breeding, and disinterestedness. *She* is at once too well born and well off, to bid Prince Hal rob her the exchequer!"

"Did you hear all the Duchess of Oldenburgh was saying of her, the other night, to Askham, (who insisted upon it, by the way,

that it was a quotation from some French author!) ‘*Elle possède une aisance complète en face de tout, — un certain chez soi qui ne s’étonne de rien, — un air de tête à part, une indépendance de geste, — une autorité de voix, une franchise de diction, — un accent décidé, une négligence impertinente de mille petites précautions physiques, — une façon d’écouter, de s’asseoir, de se lever si particulière, si entièrement convaincue de sa perfection, — un ensemble si dédaigneux de tout critique, qu’on est subjugué malgré ses préventions, par le génie même de la distinction.*’”

“I heard her say all *that*. But you are mistaken. It was of Madame Lieven, not of Lady Hertford. I agree with *you*, however, that the Lynchmore affair would be a *ménage, bourgeois à faire dresser les cheveux*. But by Jove! Look at Worcester driving like mad, with a fixed smile on his face, and a rose in his button-hole! — What makes him so beside himself this morning?”

“Because the Duke of Wellington arrives to-morrow, and his marriage is to follow. There will be a *ménage* for you, the very reverse of *bourgeois*! — The handsomet couple in England!” —

“And the most *distingué*! But *does* the Duke arrive to-morrow? By Jove, I’m sorry for it. I should have liked the lungs of England to enjoy a little respite from their Kaisermania, that they might give a cheer for our *own* hero such as would be heard from Greenwich Hill to the heights of Montmartre!”

Two days afterwards, just as this wish was in the act of accomplishment, Selina, who had been summoned to an interview with Philip Askham on his return from escorting the Emperor to Dover, found him pacing the drawing-room with an open letter in his hand, in a state of frantic exasperation.

“So!” cried he, the moment she entered the room, “I find you have profited by my absence to tamper with my family, and do me all the mischief in your power!”

“I understood,” said Selina, terrified by his violence, “that I had your permission to consult my friends?”

“*Your* friends?—Certainly!—But what is Lady Uppingham to *you*?—What do you suppose my sister cares about you, unless as one of whom I have been weak enough to be the benefactor?—And finely, finely have I been rewarded!—*You* and Edward were always the curse of my life!” —

“Lady Uppingham loved and valued my mother,” said Selina, with all the firmness in her power.

“Would she have ever heard her name, I ask you, unless for *me*? — Would any one have heard it?—Cast off by your father’s family, —rejected by her own connexions,—but for *me* she would have pottered away a miserable existence at Eastfield!—And would to Heaven she had!—God knows how bitterly I have repented the hour that ever brought us together!”

Selina turned away,—about to leave the room. She was afraid that, if she permitted herself to speak, she might forget herself.

“No!—You do not go *yet!*” cried the infuriated man, pointing to a chair. “Since you choose to take upon yourself the duties of a woman, at your mother’s foolish instigation, like a woman shall you be treated. You have chosen to bring down the storm, and must abide its violence! This is the last day we shall ever spend together, Selina, and I desire you will listen with respect to the last words I have to say to you. You refuse, it appears, to accept your uncle for guardian. You have appealed to Moran, your cursed pettifogger of a trustee, to compel me to fulfil my engagements with the Court of Chancery. Nay,—no interruption!” cried he, perceiving that Selina made a faint endeavour to speak. “And the result of all this is, that you will deprive your brother of his birthright, and prove his illegitimacy and yours before the eyes of the whole kingdom. For, since Sir Hugh de Bayhurst is not to be propitiated by your accordance with his wish of having you reside under his roof, I have no alternative but to—no matter!—*That* part of the question regards others than yourself!

Pale as death, Selina had already sunk into the chair so ferociously imposed upon her.—Worse than what had already met her ear, could scarcely follow!—

“And now, hear my determination!” said he. “I have this day accepted an invitation from the Emperor of Russia, which will take me instantly from England.—I am about to resign my seat in parliament,—and years will probably elapse before I revisit this country; for *out* of parliament, the state of my affairs renders a sojourn here impossible.—Percy will be placed at school, under the superintendence of my mother; and you, till you attain your majority or a wiser frame of mind, will also remain a school-girl:—nor shall it be the fault of my instructions, (since you *insist* upon my playing the guardian!) if your proud spirit of independence be not broken by the rigid discipline of the establishment in which it is my intention to place you.”

Not a syllable escaped the lips of Selina; not a resentful glance her eyes.—After the blasphemies against the memory of her mother, all she heard fell vaguely on her ear.

“Your preparations, I will thank you to make without loss of time,” said he: “for the foolish old woman, by whom your insolent refractoriness has been fostered, shall this very day——”

The words were suspended on his lips; for the servant, throwing open the door, suddenly announced Mr. Moran. However unwilling to be surprised in so excited a mood, it was too late for interdiction.

“You must have thought me very remiss, my dear Miss de Bayhurst,” said he,—“in not having answered your letter. But I am this moment returned to town. It followed me into the country.”—

The kindness of his address, after the brutal manner in which

she had been recently apostrophized, brought tears down the pale cheeks of Selina.—

“I perceive,” resumed Mr. Moran, “that the more painful portion of my errand here is forestalled. You are aware of the unsatisfactory manner in which I am compelled to answer your letter.”

“Had you been able to announce the granting of my request, it would have been in vain!”—faltered Selina. “Arrangements are already made for me, which lead me to regret that I should have importuned Sir Erasmus with my unreasonable wishes. Pray tell him when you write that—”

“We do not seem to understand each other, my dear young lady,”—said Mr. Moran, taking a seat nearer to Selina. “I was in hopes, from your evident distress of mind, that I was spared the pain of acquainting you of the death of my worthy old client. I left town to attend upon his last moments.”

“Then I have lost the only friend I possessed on earth!” cried Selina, clasping her hands, and losing all presence of mind.

“He has bequeathed you that which, as the world goes, will leave you no lack of friends;” said the man of business, with a grave smile.—“Let me be the first, at least, to congratulate you on coming into possession of one of the most charming estates in England,—ringfence,—land tax redeemed,—and a clear rentroll of seven thousand three hundred a-year!”

“To *me*—bequeath his fortune to *me*?”—said Selina,—to whose generous mind riches had of late acquired a positive value.—“But his sister,—his nieces,—”

“Have received such legacies as he thought it necessary to bestow.—To make you wealthy, no one has been defrauded,” continued he, with a smile; “not even myself, who, as your trustee, am handsomely remembered in the will; while the charitable institutions of Edenbourne come in for a thousand pounds. Sir Erasmus never lived up to a fourth of his income. He had a horror of becoming a mark to legacy hunters. His experience, as it was, entitled him to declare that were Mrs. Gwatkin aware of his accumulation of fortune, he should not be allowed a moment’s peace.”—

“But my brother,—surely dear Edward was more intitled than myself to the kindness of our generous friend?”—

“Sir Erasmus considered him too well provided for by his prospects from his uncle, to stand in need of other assistance.—Mr. de Bayhurst has a small legacy, simply as a token of regard.”

“And the Lodge is really mine?”—inquired Selina,—her thoughts reverting chiefly to Eastfield and the chapel.

“From this moment—at this moment!—For in consequence of your letter, (forwarded to me at the Lodge, and which, ill as he was, I did not scruple to communicate to your attached old friend,) he executed on the eve of his decease a codicil intitling you at the age of fifteen, (which I believe you attain next month?) to the sole and

absolute disposal of your property—Should any difficulty arise, I am entrusted as executor to the will, to make you a ward in Chancery.”

This last observation was addressed by a side glance to the step-father of Miss de Bayhurst;—with whom, it was clear from his refraining from a single word of comment or congratulation, she could not be on satisfactory terms;—a surmise speedily confirmed when, after a few irresolute looks and movements, the disconcerted man rose and walked to the window, as if to consult the weather, and muttering the name of Tattersall, precipitately quitted the room.

“From Mr. Askham, you have no interference to apprehend,”—resumed the man of business, as if replying to his young client’s air of relief on his departure;—“for I received this morning a letter from him, written in total ignorance of what had occurred, to renounce all claim to your guardianship,—or to speak it more honestly, demanding to be released from it, as incompatible with his interests and engagements.—With your permission, therefore, my dear young lady, I will commence my functions, by placing in your hands a couple of hundred pounds to meet your immediate exigencies;—for I know enough of you to believe that you will pay to the memory of the friend you have lost, the respect of attending his remains to the grave.”

“If you will give me leave,” said Selina,—still bewildered and distressed, but in whose heart the voice of affection was still paramount,—“before we enter into further particulars, there is a dear friend in this house whose heart I must set at rest;—for, only an hour ago, we believed ourselves on the eve of separation!”

“Mrs. Markham, doubtless,—who is expressly pointed out by the will of Sir Erasmus as a desirable person to remain your companion, till, some years hence, you select a companion for life.”—

“A still older friend,—my own kind nurse and my mother’s!” replied the young heiress, with the first smile which had brightened her face that day;—and permission being granted, her light footsteps soon reached the nursery, where old Susan was breaking her heart over the pale and bewildered boy, to whom she believed her sentence of banishment to convey a sentence of death.

“Come and be persuaded of the truth of my good news, by one on whom you will have more reliance than myself!”—said she, on returning to the drawing-room, accompanied by the breathless governess and sobbing nurse.—“Is not all happily settled, Mr. Moran?—Has not the most generous of friends bestowed on me the power of making every one about me content?—Am I not now able to offer a home to those dear friends who, when I was homeless, were so good to me,—so affectionate,—so indulgent?”—And while alternately kissing the hand of the wonder-struck Mrs. Markham,

and throwing her arms round the neck of the speechless nurse, Mr. Moran proceeded to acquaint them, with professional but explicit formality, that the child so dear to their love was one of the richest heiresses in the land.

“If this intelligence had but reached us three days ago,” ejaculated the governess, when fully possessed of the joyful particulars—“what a world of grief and apprehension would have been spared this poor child!”

“Best as it is,—best as it is!”—cried the man of business, glancing with an eye almost tearful at the affecting picture formed by the devout thankfulness of the faithful old servitor over the nursing who all but knelt at her feet as she wiped away her tears.—“The gold has been tried in the furnace,—and has not been found wanting!”—

As if conceiving her functions to be already at an end Mrs. Markham was about to retire, that she might be no restraint on the communications between Miss de Bayhurst and her trustee at a moment so important. But Selina would not hear of it.

“I have no secrets from you,—I mean to have none!”—said she, with her usual candid smile. “Let me only help Susan, who is fretting to be with Percy again, back to the nursery (for she is trembling so with joy, poor soul, that I cannot trust her alone!) and then we can deliberate on what is to be done.”

Spontaneously, however, and without deliberation, she addressed Mr. Moran on her return.

“I am quite ready,” said she, “to hasten to Edenbourne with Mrs. Markham, as you suggest, for the discharge of my first duty.—Nor will Mr. Askham offer any objection; for he is on the eve of leaving England, and had already made arrangements for me to quit his house.—But whatever steps are now taken, will be decisive.—If I lose sight of Percy,—my brother, but far more my child,—I may never be able to regain the care of him.—My altered situation in life and the establishment henceforward at my disposal, may perhaps induce his father to concede to me what, so long as I was poor, he denied.—What I desire, therefore, is that Mr. Moran, (for speak to him again on the subject *I* cannot,) will petition that, during his absence from England, Percy may remain with me, having the same attendants, advantages, and comforts, he has enjoyed under his father’s roof.”—

“If I know anything of that father, such a petition will be readily granted!”—observed the governess, in a low voice.—

“Granted to a sister of his son, having between seven and eight thousand a year at her disposal, but on no other consideration,” added the man of the law,—“for on every occasion of his life, Self has been his ruling influence.—But how is all this to be managed?—To-morrow morning, my dear young lady, we must start for the

Lodge.—I propose being here with my travelling carriage, soon after eight, when gentlemen of Mr. Askham's description are usually in their first sleep.”—

“Surely you might find him this morning,—either personally or by letter?—You were kind enough just now to bid me consider for the present your time my own?”—

“But *where* is such a Jack-a-lantern to be looked for?”—said the lawyer, taking out his watch. “He is doubtless a man of many clubs,—and I might waste the whole day in shooting beside the mark!”—

“I understood that Mr. Askham had business at Tattersall's, where his horses arrived from Eden Castle last night,” observed Mrs. Markham.

“And I am nearly certain that he will be at the House of Commons before dinner,” added Selina. “But before you make the attempt, dear Mr. Moran, I have still a request to offer that will require your indulgence;—for to have been rich only an hour after being poor all my life, and already a beggar for money, seems unpardonable! I have, however, reason to know that Mr. Askham is in pecuniary difficulties.—He is about to leave England.—If, instead of giving me the sum you propose, for which I have no immediate use, you would offer five hundred, or as much more as you will permit, to *him*, in a manner not to offend him,—in a manner that would seem neither a bribe on Percy's account, nor a mean instalment towards the repayment of all I must have cost him!”—

“I expected no less of you,”—interrupted the man of business,—taking off his spectacles and wiping them, as though he wanted to obtain a clearer view of Selina's animated face;—“and I am glad that this request should have been made under circumstances that guarantee me against its being suggested by himself.—You shall be obeyed;—chiefly because to expedite Mr. Askham's departure, is highly desirable for all parties.—But I fairly forewarn you,” continued he, with a shrewd smile, “that for a month and a day to come, you are still under my control; and for that time, I shall play the tyrant to prevent your wasting your means upon one of the most thankless and barren natures with which I ever had to deal.—The whole property of Sir Erasmus would not content the rapacity of one whose extravagance is solely caused by the ambition of shining in that shallow and shifting world of fashion, whose impressions are as little profitable or permanent, as those on a looking glass.”—

Eager to gratify his interesting charge, Mr. Moran proceeded instantly to the discharge of his commission; leaving Selina and her joyful companions to complete their hasty preparations for quitting that house for ever.—But till the answer of the man of business arrived to re-assure her mind, not a step could the anxious girl prevail on herself to take.—Unless the brother so dear to her

heart and so sacred in her eyes, were to be her companion in her new home, it would be no home to Selina.

All day she sat listening, with a beating heart, for the knock which she trusted would announce the return of the ambassador; and she would have found courage to encounter even Philip himself, with her petition, if pre-assured that he was in a mood for compliance.—But it was not until evening that, in place of the visit she expected, a letter from Mr. Moran was placed in her hand.—

“Your good intentions have been unavailing, my dear Miss de Bayhurst,” wrote the man of business. “I found Mr. Askham an hour ago, at the House of Commons. But to my great surprise, he totally declined your generous offer.”

Poor Selina!—At that moment, all the glory of her heiresshood fell to the ground! It was not for some minutes that tears of mortification permitted her to resume the perusal of the letter.

“I fancy I can trace his disinterestedness,” continued Moran,—“to the fact (announced by this evening’s papers) that the sale of his stud at Tattersall’s has realized a sum of nearly two thousand pounds.—But no matter.—He declines, though not ungraciously, your proposal.—

“With respect to the child, he is content to leave him with his attendant in your hands; and I am consequently writing from Long Acre,—where I have just secured a substantial landau for your family ark, in place of my not very roomy chariot. The trunks, etc., will reach you with this letter; and to-morrow at eight A.M. precisely, I shall be in Brook Street;—remaining, till then,

“Your faithful humble servant,

“JOHN MORAN.”

The lawyer evidently considered the gift of five hundred pounds, the only important part of his embassy!—

All now was joyful preparation.—Except by Selina, the melancholy purport of the journey seemed altogether overlooked.—But though her friends exulted in her good fortune, in the depths of *her* gentle heart there was room, not only for thankfulness to Heaven for her marvellous reverse of fortune, but for respectful gratitude to the memory of the dead.—

Very hurried, but very awkward, was the parting interview between her and her stepfather.—Judiciously enough, Philip contrived to return home only so short a time before her usual hour of retiring to rest, that, Percy being already asleep, was spared his father’s cold farewell; while a few incoherent *phrases d’usage*, sufficed for his adieux to herself and Mrs. Markham.—

Among other things, he asked for her commands to the Hardynges and Middlemores.—

“On the following day he was off for Paris, as the first station of a much longer tour.—He thought, indeed, of obtaining an appoint-

ment abroad.—If she wrote, it must be under cover to Lady Uppingham, who would always be in possession of his address.”

And thus, they parted ;—their mutual embarrassment and inward emotion concealed under the well-bred semblance of indifference.—It was only when Selina had reached the door for departure, and felt that she was losing sight, perhaps for ever, of one with whom so large a portion of her life had been spent, that the charities of her nature induced her to pause a moment, for the reiteration of her warm and grateful thanks for his allowing her the care of Percy.

“He will be the first object of my life,” said she.—“He will be to me, what he has ever been,—a sacred bequest from my mother.”

“I have no anxiety on his account,” replied Philip, abruptly,—impatient to terminate the awkward interview. “Though he might almost as well be without a father, poor child, I am satisfied he will never want a friend!”

The following evening, just as in the dewy stillness of a June twilight the little caravan under the charge of Mr. Moran came within view of Upton, where they were to spend the night,—just as Philip Askham was swearing at the claret of the York Hotel at Dover, from whence he was to depart in the Calais packet at the turn of the tide,—and just as every mechanic in the metropolis was throwing up his cap on learning the arrival of the Duke of Wellington, with the circulation of his want-thinned blood hurried by eagerness to look on the face of one by whom the fame of Old England had been so gloriously upheld,—a letter was brought to Brook Street, which the messenger insisted required an immediate answer.—Nothing would convince her,—(for it was a woman,)—that the family could have left town,—that the servants were paid off,—that the house was about to be given up.

“Mr. Askham, at least, had not left town. She *must* speak to Mr. Askham!”

Her incredulity, great as it was, did not, however, equal that of her employer, when, half an hour afterwards, Lady Anastasia herself, plainly dressed and closely veiled, made her appearance ; to whom, as to a near relative of Miss de Bayhurst, further particulars were afforded.

“The governess, with the young lady and gentleman, had left town for Edenbourne.—Mr. Askham was gone abroad.”

Such was the mode in which the false one accomplished his promise of meeting her in town!—

The following day, however, the unhappy woman, (after a sleepless night in her dreary home in Grosvenor Square, distracted by the conviction that she had been decoyed to London only to afford a last tribute to the vanity of Philip!) was almost disposed to wish that he *had* quitted England without further thought of her, as she was at first tempted to suppose.—For the letter that reached her by the Dover post, placing at her disposal the fatal secret of the dispu-

table legitimacy of Edward and Selina, as an instrument by which she might dictate advantageous terms of separation to her husband,—filled her with indignation and disgust.

“Injure those poor defenceless orphans?—Never,—never!”—cried she,—flinging aside the letter,—and covering her face with her hands for shame at being so poorly interpreted.

“And for this despicable being,” murmured she,—“who deserts me in my hour of misery,—and would degrade me to still further guilt,—have I sacrificed my home, my family, my self-respect, and every hope of happiness or pardon—here and hereafter!”

While all was joy and triumph throughout the exulting city of London, in honour of the Hero at length restored to its prayers,—she,—the fallen one,—the dishonoured idol of so many hearts,—remained weeping, friendless, and alone;—scarcely daring to raise her eyes,—scarcely daring to interrogate her heart:—the past, the present, the future, presenting one dreary blank!—Abide in that house the coming of her infuriated husband, she dared not.—But where else could she look for shelter?—*Who* would afford a resting-place to the sole of her foot?—In that hour of feasting, what threshold might she presume to cross with the ashes of shame upon her head?—

It was not till after the lapse of many miserable hours, that a ray of hope presented itself to her humbled spirit.—She had indeed sinned against heaven:—but there was one who had been ever merciful.—At *his* feet she might not humble herself in vain!—*His* protection might still be vouchsafed her.—She would “arise and go to her father!”—

CHAPTER XXXII.

Had I to good advice but harkit,
I might by this ha'e led a markit,
Or struttit to a bank, and clarkit
My cash account;
While here, half-mad,—hal-fed,—half-sarkit,
Is a' the amount!

BURNS.

PAUL. Would you not deem it breath'd, and that those veins
Did verily bear blood?

POL.

Masterly done!

The very life seems warm upon the lip!

LEON. The fixure of his eye has motion in't
As we were mock'd with art!

SHASPEARE.

“And so the little hussy is an heiress after all!”—cried Lord Hardyng, after listening with the warmest interest to the flourishing off-hand account given by Philip to his sisters, on his arrival in Paris, of Selina's unexpected inheritance,—which was welcomed

by both Emma and Susan almost with tears of joy.—“I never was better pleased!”

“’Twas the only thing she wanted,” cried Lord Middlemore, “to make her a wife for a prince.”

“Or happy without one!” added Lady Hardynges.

“Never was there a little creature more highly gifted,” resumed her husband. “To borrow the words of Bacon, Selina possesses the beauty which is exterior virtue, and the virtue which is internal beauty.”

“Which means, I take it, that she is as good as she is pretty, and as pretty as she is good,” observed the more plainly spoken Middlemore.

“Had you the least idea, Emma,” said Philip,—addressing his sister,—“that the wretched-looking old creature, Sir Erasmus, was a man of such considerable fortune?”

“I never trouble myself about the fortune of those in whom I am not personally interested,”—replied Lady Hardynges. “But I remember that, when poor dear Evelyn refused him, he offered to settle eight thousand a year on her and children.”

“Which, Heaven knows, it would have been more prudent had she accepted!”—rejoined Philip with a sigh.—“However, the greater part of it has, after all, devolved upon Selina, who is now independent as a queen.—Fortunate enough for me,—at a moment when my projected visit to St. Petersburg rendered it desirable that my hands should be disencumbered.”

“Not one of us but would have been glad to take charge of her for you, dear Philip, and of Percy too!” interrupted his sister Susan.—“It would be like possessing the spirit of peace in one’s house, to have the care of Selina!”—

By the little family circle assembled in Paris, the news of Miss de Bayhurst’s good fortune was, in fact, received as though it regarded one of themselves. Every one agreed that a stroke of luck could not have fallen on more propitious ground.

But if every one agreed on *that* point, all were not unanimous in satisfaction.—Lord Delvyn, who had hitherto been the life and soul of their pleasures and excursions, now moped away from them, morning after morning, for a solitary ride in the Bois;—or was heard of, defying in one of those Seine water-tubs, miscalled boats, the Morgne or the *filets de St. Cloud*; rowing as if he had a mind to be drowned,—or riding as if he had a mind to break his neck!

Philip Askham, on noticing the change, ascribed it to ill-luck at the Salon;—Lord Hardynges, who was himself half in love with Mademoiselle Mars, to some boyish passion of the *coulisses*; while Lord Middlemore was of opinion that, whatever might be the cause of his temporary insanity, “it was no excuse for spoiling a horse’s mouth, by his present confounded mode of riding!”—Delvyn, how-

ever, kept his own counsel! It was only to himself he confided his vexation at having lost all hope of his little wife.

“I looked upon Selina to be as much my own, as one of my sisters!”—was his secret meditation, as he pulled against the green waves breaking round the reach of Marly.—“It was the delight of my life to think how happy I should make her, by indulging all her whims and fancies; she, who has been kept in by such a deuced hard hand as Philip Askham’s!—She used to accuse me, dear child, of being a bear;—and all my object here in studying French, (like a schoolboy or an ass as I am,) and dawdling about with Hardyng trying to acquire a taste for the pursuits she fancies, was with the hope of becoming what might please her, a year or two hence!—But now that she is an heiress,—now that all my pains will be ascribed to interested motives,—I would sooner shoot myself than follow up my intentions!”

When the post brought news from England, he was the most eager of the party in hoping that the letters of the Askham family might contain further accounts of the young heiress’s proceedings. But those of Lady Uppingham were full of the Duke of Wellington, the fêtes offered to him,—the public thanksgiving at St. Paul’s, in which he had so large a portion;—and, above all, the popular enthusiasm that beset him wherever he appeared.

“I dare say Philip will have acquainted you,” wrote she, “of the great things we attempted for the Emperor. But all was then show and surface, compared with the heart’s-core enthusiasm which is now every where manifest! I, who look upon the Duke as Uppingham’s friend,—as the general of his choice, and the object of his undeviating support in the cabinet,—can scarcely restrain my feelings in witnessing those of the country.”

Lord Delvyn had the greatest respect for her ladyship’s feelings; but he would rather she had written about Selina!

Nor were the other members of the family more communicative.—With Eden Castle, the sisters had no intercourse.—Lord Askham resented in surly silence their tacit avoidance of all recognition of his wife; and Henry was making considerably too long speeches in the House of Commons, to have leisure for writing even the shortest of letters.—Except, indeed, to his elder brother!—To the noble patron of Edenbourne, he had communicated at some length his satisfaction at hearing that, the following session, the representative of his borough would be numbered among the supporters of the most triumphant of governments; for that it had broken its head by running against a stone wall in America,—or been bullied by Catholic committees, in the case of O’Connell’s crusade against the rescript of Quarantotti,—he discreetly left out of the question!

Adverting, however, to the former ungrateful conduct of Philip towards Lord Uppingham, and citing the opinion of Cicero, (to a

man more familiar with the opinions of Pigault Le Brun,) that “Omne dixeris male dictum cum ingratum hominem dixeris,”—he admitted that he was a little surprised to learn that Lord Askham had found reason to complain of the liberties taken with his property during his absence; but he sincerely hoped that his misguided brother might live to see the error of his ways; a sanctimonious epistle, which Captain Wegg, foreseeing that the plausible writer would sooner or later become a leading administrator of the affairs of the nation, declared to be deserving of print, and begged from his noble patron to lay aside among his autographs.

Even from his own family, Lord Delvyn heard no more about Selina than he already knew,—that she had succeeded to a splendid fortune and gone down to Edenbourne to bury her benefactor and take possession of her estates.—For the London season had so prolonged itself, as to detain Lord and Lady Lynchmore unreasonably late in town: and the unpleasant change of proprietorship at Eden Castle, determined them to adhere to the system so much advocated by their son, of passing the alternate autumns in Ireland;—the more essential on the present occasion, because, on her attainment of years of discretion in January, Lady Emilia was to give her hand, where from childhood she had given her heart, to Sir Cornelius O’Flynn, of Flynnstown Castle; and to hear the abhorrent tone in which Lady Lynchmore pronounced the name of the said “Sir Cornelius O’Flynn, of Flynnstown Castle,” might have convulsed a settlement of Hernhutters with laughter!

And yet, Sir Cornelius O’Flynn, of Flynnstown Castle, was descended from O’Neal, King of Ireland, of the blood royal of Herimon, and far-away cousin to Alexander the Great:—while, to save her life, the lofty Countess would not have known where to look for a grand-father, unless in the London Tradesmen’s directory!

The only correspondent who imparted to the little circle at the Hotel de la Terrasse any *real* tidings of Edenbourne, was Sophia Askham.—How they were acquired, it was impossible to say:—clearly not from Selina herself, though so warm a friendship united them:—for not a syllable but redounded to the honour of the young heiress, the last person on earth to make much of her good actions.

The ready money left by Sir Erasmus having proved double in amount what even himself was aware of, she had proportionably increased the legacies bequeathed to his nieces, to his executor, to the charitable institutions of the county; and of the many who, in the first instance, had inveighed against the absurdity of investing a child of fifteen with the responsibility of a woman, nearly all had become converts to her cause. “In the singular position in which Miss de Bayhurst was placed, there was an excuse for rendering *her* case an exception.”

In reply, however, to the eager invitations pressed on her by the

neighbourhood, she signified her intention of completing her education under the care of Mrs. Markham, in complete retirement, as would have been the case but for her accession of fortune. All the additional power she seemed disposed to exercise was in favour of the neighbouring poor;—and by adding to her establishment, as musician, a young *protégée* of the Marchioness of Uppingham; to render whose services available in the parish church of Edenbourne, a fine organ was presented by the young heiress, as though a bequest from Sir Erasmus.

To honour his memory, a simple but handsome monument was also in process of erection. But it was observed that of the private chapel in the grounds, (except to the faithful Moutiar who always had it in charge,) Selina never parted with the key.

“In [short,” wrote Sophia to her sister Susan, “dear Selina is already as much beloved by every one about her, as she ever was by ourselves.”

“Just what I expected!” cried Lord Delvyn. “I knew she would turn out an angel!”

“Just what *I* had a right to expect!” added Philip in a lower voice;—“for I gave her an excellent governess and the best of masters.”

A postscript added to Sophia’s letter, however, had more interest for *him* than all her anecdotes of his stepdaughter.—He was safe!—He had escaped a long-impending and long-dreaded evil!—An amicable separation it appeared had by Lord Grandison’s manly and spirited interference, been effected between Lady Anastasia de Bayhurst and her husband!

All that Sophia Askham could venture to say on so delicate a subject was, that “Sir Hugh was understood to have been a great tyrant to his wife, and a very ill-tempered man;—that most people pitied Lady Anastasia, and were determined to notice and support her.” But she neither mentioned nor knew that Lord Grandison, without denying the errors of his daughter, had insisted so strongly upon provocation and injurious usage, that Sir Hugh had, of his own accord, proposed to make her a liberal allowance and the *amende honorable* of non-accusation, on condition of never seeing her face again!

No sooner was it clearly understood in society that the case was pacific,—that no scandal, no trial,—no divorce were to be apprehended,—than the *beau monde* adopted her as a victim, and took her to its heart. The Allied Sovereigns, i. e. the Dandies and Exclusives, became her vassals and handmaidens; and on witnessing the enthusiasm manifested in her favour, Lady Grandison declared, with a triumphant air, that, from the first, she was certain she “could carry her through.”

But when the broken-spirited young woman fell upon her father’s neck to sob out her grateful thanks for his timely and loving kind-

ness, it was not because he had "*carried her through!*"—it was because he had *brought her home!*—

"A confounded bore off my mind!"—was Philip's mental cogitation, when his sister Susan communicated to him this piece of information; (which served to explain certain paragraphs as mysterious as all the initials of the alphabet could make them, that had recently appeared among the fashionable inuendoes of the Morning Post.)—"I have always apprehended, like the sword of Damocles over my head, that, some day or other, that unfortunate woman would burst into the midst of us here, and demand my protection. Though I was careful to leave no address, and have never written her a line, (for her own sake as much as mine,) she *must* by this time be aware where I am; and considering her exaggerated professions of attachment, I am rather surprised that she has not followed up her system by throwing herself at my head!—Heaven grant she may have found some other Conrad;—for your passion-prompted Gulnares, who are for breaking through all bonds of decency, are, in *my* opinion, fit only for Bedlam!"—

As it was his purpose to loiter through the summer, so as to reach St. Petersburg only at the moment when the Emperor, who was making a prolonged tour, was likely to arrive for the winter fêtes, he now determined to fulfil his original intentions of proceeding to Baden, by way of Verdun;—the intelligence afforded by the *avoué* employed, rendering it desirable that he should substantiate the evidence on the spot.

Of Verdun, however, he said not a word to his family; who were on the eve of returning to England, recalled by the engagement formerly alluded to by Lord Hardyng.

"But when you have sponged upon your Emperor as long as decency will allow, Phil—" said Lord Middlemore, half in jest, half earnest, the last evening they were together,—“I suppose you mean to come back to England and see what Askham and his factotum are about?—You'll be having him send Vake to parliament,—or put him into the Church,—or some dreadful thing or other, if you do not look sharp."

"I have no immediate intention of returning to England," was the cold reply of Philip Askham.

'Hard up, eh?—I was afraid so!—That Smolensko business was a confounded unlucky affair; and *didn't* Lesly clean you out handsomely at picquet, the last time he was at Eden Castle!—However, I hope you'll always recollect, Phil, that before I was Susy's husband, I was your cousin, and that blood's thicker than water.—If you happen to be in want of a few hundreds, Baring's my banker, you know. You've only to draw upon *me*; and none of the family need be the wiser."

A decent blush mantled on Philip's cheek: not that money should be offered him by a kinsman he had ridiculed and despised; but

from recollecting how abominably, in dealing with him about the sale of Black Muley, he had tried to overreach his brother-in-law !

From Lord Hardyng, on the other hand, he received, not indeed such noble offers,—for the nature of his fortune rendered it impossible;—but the kindest and most judicious advice.

“I am sorry to find you are bound for Baden, Phil,” said he,—“for I hear it spoken of as a place where fortunes are oftener marred than made;—*this* season especially;—for it is full of Russian and Austrian generals who have been pouncing upon sackfull of florins wherever they could lay hands on them:—and there is a proverb, you know, about money won over the devil’s back !”

“No fear for *me*!”—replied Philip. “I have no sacksfull of florins to stake against theirs!—Besides the play-season at Baden is over.”

“And when is your *work* season to begin?” said Hardyng; scarcely knowing how far he might venture, in catechizing the broken-down dandy;—“for your hopes being knocked on the head at Eden Castle, I conclude you will think of doing something for yourself, or getting something done?—It is a thousand pities you ever gave up your place !”

“And if I had *not*, who was to have taken the management of the Askham estates?—I understand your smile!—You are right!—I should have said the *mismanagement* !”

“You do *not* understand my smile, if you think it bore reference to any one but myself.—I was thinking of a dispute I had yesterday with Cecil Danby—”

“Cecil?—What the deuce is *he* doing in Paris?”

“He arrived two days ago, at the Breteuil, with Lady Ormington; and yesterday, wasted half-an-hour at Tortoni’s, trying to convince me that you and I are five years older than himself,—whereas I plead guilty only to five-and-thirty!—And you?—

“To thirty-four !”

Lord Hardyng shook his head.—“Somewhat late, my dear Philip, to begin life again; for to *that* I fear you are reduced?”—

“I have still the noble fortune bequeathed me by my father!”—retorted Philip, with some bitterness; “to say nothing of some hundreds of thousands pounds’ worth of worldly wisdom, bought with my own wretched experience !”

“I had rather hear of your having ten thousand in the Stocks!—The little respect I ever had for worldly wisdom, I lose day by day. It is like the honey which bees extract from the *Kalmia latifolia*,—which, though taxing their pains and ingenuity as much as the nutritious kind, proves mere poison after all.”

“But since some bees have only this poison-plant within reach,” observed Philip, drily,—“no one can be surprised that their

combs are tainted.—However, my pedlar's pack, such as it is, constitutes the chief part of my wealth : so do not put me out of conceit with it."

"I wish only to put you in better conceit with your fellow-creatures,"—rejoined Hardyng; "for worldly wisdom is the half-way house towards misanthropy.—I can understand, (as an old friend of yours and Lady Anastasia's,) that just now, you may think it desirable to absent yourself from England. But when the black cloud has blown over, why not come back again, and take your stand on your own ground, in the great mêlée?—This is a pleasant city we are living in,—and a mighty pleasant life we have lived in it; but, as I was saying yesterday to Cecil, to live like those who have to die at the end of their lives,—to live like those who have a conscience to appease as well as appetites and a digestion,—nothing like the land where you hear on Sundays only the church bells; and where you take your sunshine, as the French their wine, in the shape of *eau rouge*!—England, my dear Philip, is the wholesomest place for English people."—

"For English people who have vested interests in the country,"—interrupted Philip.—

"One and all, we have vested interests in the country!"—said Lord Hardyng.—"We have the graves of our fathers and the earth that will afford graves to our children;—the language that was spoken round our cradle, and *ought* to be spoken round our death-bed!—I am no bigot to the prejudices of England.—I am thankful that she should be enlightened, let the light shine from whence it may,—ay, even from the tapers on the altars of Rome, or the seven-branched candlestick of the synagogue! But, like the banyan tree, as I grow older, I incline to the parent soil; and take firmer root in it by every new branch!—I swear to you, Philip, that, with a choice of fortunes, I would rather so live as to add my single brick to the great pyramid of our national greatness,—no matter in what department,—literature,—jurisprudence,—polity,—science,—art,—than flutter as the brightest butterfly in continental sunshine, enjoying the delightful blue skies of Naples, or delightful blue coteries of Paris."—

"Hear, hear, hear, hear, hear!—If you talk so confoundedly like Henry," was the sneering reply of Philip Askham, "I shall conclude you want to be made Lord Rector of Glasgow—or that you have been losing money at the Salon!—*A revoir*,—I will not say *Adieu*! for since you are in so philosophical a vein, I shall be sure to meet you to-night in the *foyer* of the opera!"—

"No, I must wish you good-bye *now*!"—said Hardyng. "I have promised to devote my last evening in Paris to Delvyn and Cecil."—

Lord Hardyng was in fact little inclined to expose himself to the flippant observations of one so heartless as Philip, concerning the

motive of his return to England; for his errand in London was one of a sacred nature.—

Immediately after the death of his father, a noble subscription had been raised among his private friends,—chiefly the members of the bar, to erect a monumental statue to his memory in Westminster Abbey; and having been completed by Flaxman, it was now about to be inaugurated. The work, exquisite in its execution, bore the impress of genius dedicating to genius its best endeavours.—It was not the mere result of *hireling* labour,—the artist had wrought with the hope of doing honour to one of the most distinguished patrons of art.—A frequent guest at Eske Hill, he justified the assertion of Goethe in his matchless play of Torquato Tasso, that, more than the greatest of princes, by the tribute of her own creations,

Genius requiteth Hospitality!—

A solemn promise had been made to Lord Hardyng by his mother, who remained at Eske Hill in charge of her idolized grandchildren during his absence, that she would not visit the Abbey till his arrival.—Even then, he chose to survey the object of his veneration first, alone. He could not venture to expose, even to *such* a witness, the nature of his feelings!—

Lord Hardyng was represented,—not “in his habit as he lived,”—but in his habit as he judged;—a fine bas-relief on the pedestal of the statue illustrating a well-known incident in his early forensic career, when a poor Cumbrian peasant woman, preserved by the eloquence of his gratuitous defence, and subsequently *proved* to be innocent by the confession of the guilty party,—beset him on his way into court, and threw herself with her whole family at his feet.—

Inexpressible was the emotion of Emma's husband on beholding this life-like portrait of his father, calm, reflective, commanding,—uniting his air of high intelligence and strong determination with his peculiarly benignant smile, planted for the veneration of centuries in that sepulchre of kings, in the midst of all the glories by which the triumphs of mind, heart, or station, have illustrated the land.—By his own endowments and industry were those honours achieved by that excellent father; and while contemplating them with tearful eyes, the vigorous truth of the line,

Qui sert bien sa patrie n'a pas besoin d'aïeux!

came home like the voice of nature to his heart.—

From the excitement of his own feelings on the occasion, he almost dreaded the gratifying duty of supporting his mother to the sacred spot.—For he was unable to make allowances for the subduing nature of a woman's grief, on visiting the last abode of the partner of her happier life.—The feelings of Lady Hardyng *could* not exult like those of her son!—*She* had scarcely courage to look

upon the effigy that recalled only too vividly the better self of her existence.—It was not till, on a future occasion, the proud son was accompanied by his own dear wife, that he obtained perfect sympathy in his feelings while whispering to her—“*This* is indeed something to excite the emulation of one’s children.—*Here*, dear Emma, shall I bring our sons, to give them courage for the duties of life!”—

A great vexation was it meanwhile to the Hardynges to be prevented by their awkward position with regard to Eden Castle, from accepting the invitation despatched by Selina to those so dear to her mother, to be the first to visit her in her new home.—A similar obstacle prevented the other members of the Askham family from becoming her guests. But though it was assigned by the Dowager, as her motive for refusing permission to Sophia to visit her friend, it is more than probable that her objections *really* arose from a tardy discovery that Edenbourne Rectory sufficed the ambitions of the youngest daughter she had destined to become a duchess; and that the Hardynges, originally so offensive to her as “professional people,” were likely to do her the further injury of defiling the family tree of all the Askhams, by a connexion with Divinity as well as Law!—Sophia’s trothplight to William Scotney, which occurred during the unlucky visit to Eden Castle purporting the engagement of Lord Delvyn, was in fact the origin of that intimate acquaintance with Miss de Bayhurst’s comings and goings, which her sisters and his lordship were so little able to account for.—

As yet, however, the Dowager remained inexorable to the prayers of the Church.—It was in vain that Henry, who was somewhat anxious to marry off his last remaining sister out of his way, reminded her that, sooner or later, a spiritual peerage might place Mr. Scotney on the same level with his cousin; and that the Duke of Woburn, and Marquis of Longleat, had both sons in the church. At present, he was only rector of Edenbourne,—at present he was no better than Dr. Hacket, who used always to call her My lady, and eat his fish with a knife;—and she could not sanction such a *mésalliance*.—Lady Lynchmore was to be pitied!—But the Sir Cornelius O’Flynn of Flynnstown Castle, she had formely presumed to disparage, was a crowned head compared with this odious Mr. Scotney!—

“Be patient,—she will become more reasonable in time!”—was the consolatory adjuration of Selina, who felt that her happiness would be completed by the settlement of her friend at the rectory; and had already promised the young pastor the reversion of a living in her own gift, which would more than double their income.—

In the distribution of poor Sir Erasmus’s legacies, Mr. Scotney was in fact of the greatest assistance to her; and a handsome school-house was in process of erection on a piece of ground she had

given for the purpose; the progress of which engrossed all the attention he could spare from his love, or the young heiress from the Lodge.

Not that in the mansion itself, much remained for her to execute. From the moment the singular old man conceived the intention of bequeathing his property to the daughter of Evelyn, he had devoted his whole time and a large portion of his income, to render the place all she could desire.—The house was already excellent; and though, on her arrival, a considerable portion of it was still unfurnished, rich carpets lay, rolled up, awaiting the orders of the infirm old man, and innumerable objects of virtù and costly furniture, had never been removed from their cases.—

The adjustment of all this afforded a pleasant occupation for the leisure of the young *Châtelaine*; and though Edward, on his arrival at the Lodge to spend a portion of his holidays with his sister, complained that she was doing the thing meanly,—that by comparison with Bayhurst or Grosvenor Square, or even Eden Castle, her simple chintz and white maple looked cell-ish,—Quakerish,—and poverty-struck,—Selina held firm,—she would not even listen to him when he prescribed a double dose of Latin grammar for Percy; and on pretence of his being too old for petticoat government, insisted on taking him to see the hounds meet, mounted on a pony which, in proportion to old Elshie, was as Bucephalus to a house-dog!—It was, indeed, almost a relief to her when her wild brother, whose society the altered state of the establishment at Bayhurst rendered doubly precious to the deserted Sir Hugh, pleaded the necessity of returning to his uncle.—

For she had been sadly afraid that Edward's reckless spirits would betray her into a nearer intimacy with Lord Askham's family than the civil bow by which, every Sunday after church, she recognized him who had given her so cordial an invitation to Eden Castle when her prospects were less brilliant than now; but which he could not interpret into an intention of submitting to be introduced to Miladi Hasscamp.

Nothing that she could plead, however, had prevented Edward from riding over to the castle for “a glimpse of the old place;”—and when invited to luncheon, the young Etonian could not refuse himself the delight of seeing “Vake” unlock the cellaret, and economize the peaches and chicken-pie!—

“Poor old Eden!” cried he. “To see that woman sitting at the head of the table, with her diamond earrings of a morning, and her voice and moustache like a corporal of dragoons, in the place of my poor gentle mother, was enough to make one's blood run cold!”—

Lord Askham, who in his saucy boyhood had found such fault with the establishment of his parents,—the woman cook, and humdrum domestic evenings of Eden Castle,—had, in fact, by his

own imprudence, reduced himself to the most penurious and comfortless shifts; and by way of nightly recreation, to a glass of stiff punch, and picquet with a captain of marines!

Meanwhile, the autumn and winter proceeded uneventfully but cheerfully at the Lodge. Continually employed, always occupied with projects for the advantage of others, not a moment of Selina's new existence hung heavy on her hands; and though, under any circumstances, respect for the memory of her benefactor would have excluded company from the Lodge during the year succeeding his death, she experienced no desire for the extension of the family circle.—

“When the spring comes, however, my dear young lady, I shall be having you run up to town!”—said Mr. Moran, with a knowing smile, when he visited them at Christmas, and rendered ample justice to the admirable administration of the child-heiress who was still his ward.—

“Even less than now!”—was the frank reply of Selina; “for then, the country will have resumed its beauties; and Mrs. Markham and I,—and even Percy and Susan,—know too well what it is to undergo a daily walk in Grosvenor Square!”—

And, true to her word, Selina passed the season in the country.—

The Hexham family were still in Ireland, and Lord Delvyn in Paris;—not even Lady Emilia's marriage having availed to entice him from the pleasant capital, where his growing intimacy with Cecil Danby afforded a new view of existence.—

The coxcomb *par excellence* appeared to take peculiar pleasure in completing the education of one of the finest young men who had graced the English aristocracy since his own *début* in public life;—partly because, in Cecil's first season of flirtations previous to his departure for Portugal, his attention had been a moment attracted by the full-blown charms of Lord Lynchmore's *parvenue* countess,—never renowned for cruelty; but far more, on account of the frankness of Lord Delvyn's manly nature and his vivid gaiety of heart.—

But when, by degrees, during the convalescence that followed Danby's all but fatal accident in the Bois de Boulogne, and confinement in the Hotel of the La Vrillières, the confidence of the warm-hearted Delvyn was fully accorded to his new friend, there was something so new and piquant in the idea of the “little wife,”—the child-heiress,—the Titania of the Welsh border,—who from a sort of Mrs. Margery Meanwell had suddenly started up into a divinity capable of imposing on the son of the stately Lady Linchmore,—which captivated the fancy of Cecil.

After the vapourish affectations and meretricious graces of *la femme incomprise*, it was refreshing to hear of Selina's transparent complexion, and transparent simplicity of mind. For Cecil had become so much accustomed to see the lily painted (with *rouge végétal*) and fresh perfume thrown upon the violet, (out of Lubin's

shop,) that the idea of a *natural* natural flower was like the revival of spring!—

Still, there was enough of the original sin of coxcombry remaining in Lady Ormington's son, to tempt him into citing the charms of the lovely Countesses of the Faubourg St. Germain,—and, still more, those of the fifty divine *coryphées* just then figuring in “Les Danaïdes,” in opposition to the untutored attractions of one who, but that she was an heiress, would have been still a schoolgirl!—

“My dear Cecil!”—cried the young Lord,—“I have received such a powerful lesson against the odiousness of selfish dandyism, in the person of Philip Askham, that I swear to you I would sooner become usher to a charity school than adopt the vocation of a *roué*.—Such creatures are unworthy to live, and unfit to die!—Of two bad things, better be a humdrum than a humbug!”—

Like the squire of Marmion,

Warmly he spoke,—with earnest grace,—
His faith was painted in his face,—

and to those whose feelings were *really* warm, and faith *really* fervent, Cecil knew better than to oppose the phosphoric light of irony that shines but glows not, which he reserved for such boon companions as Sir Walter Lesly and Horace Trevor. But for this, he might have responded, with one of Henry Askham's owlish looks,—

Σεμνὸς ἔρος ἀρετῆς ὁ δὲ κυπρίδος ἄσχος ὀφειλλά.

But Delvyn was so manifestly of the better clay of human nature, that it would have been unworthy to deteriorate even the surface, by so much as a vitriolic drop!—

“But I don't understand, Del,” said he,—“why,—since you are thus sworn to the service of your fairy queen, and your father has a house standing empty within a mile of her gates, you do not indulge your eyes with a sight of her, instead of moping up and down the dismantled Louvre, like a schoolboy in an orchard where the apple-harvest is over; or attuning your ear to the music of Racine by the declamation of Mademoiselle Duchesnois,—who, though she may act like a Muse, *looks* deucedly like a Gorgon!”—

“In the first place, I could not reconcile it to my conscience, nor, I fear, to the decencies of society, to be philandering at Hexham Hall, while my family is celebrating its first wedding in dear old Ireland;—where my mother would keep me perpetually on the edge of the sword, by her icy civilities to such of the royal blood of Tara with which our own has been recently intermingled, as may present themselves at Lynchmore in seedy coats, or gowns of questionable length of waist.”—

“So far,—cogent!”—

“In the next place, I never heard of a gardener who had been waiting for years the blooming of an aloe on whose perfection the

welfare of his future life was to depend, who was ass enough, at the eleventh hour, to injure the development of the blossom by meddling with the tender leaves or digging round the root!"—

"An illustration worthy of Tom the Great or my Philhellenic friend, Byron!"—cried Cecil. "You talk like a Daniel come to judgment: and as Juvenal hath it,

Nullum numen abest si sit prudentia!

But if Hexham be out of reach, I see no reason why you should deny yourself London, which is some hundreds of miles nearer to your *belle au bois dormant*!"—

"I have afforded you *one* exquisite reason, O most pedantic of coxcombs!"—cried Delvyn, laughing,

"Immo duas dabo, inquit ille, una si parum est:
Et si duarum pœnitebit, addentur duæ!"

Is it so long since you confronted that hideous community,—the match-hunting dowagers of London,—that you have forgotten the *corvée* of being hunted through a season's balls,—besieged with billets-doux for which you care as much as for a blacksmith's bill, and invitations you are as little eager to obey, as a sheriff's warrant?—For my part, I hate to find myself provoked into mistrust of the good-humour and graciousness of girls, (honest-hearted, perhaps, as my own sisters!) only because they have mothers as cunning as Fouché, and as active as Bow Street runners."

"It is true," observed the Coxcomb, taking a complacent view of his own manly leg,— "that such things be in London, and overcome one like a summer cloud, without intitling one to put up an umbrella.—As an elder son, however, I fear *your* experience may have been greater than mine!"—

"The horrid mother of those charming sisters of Philip Askham's, (and if according to the motto of the Rodneys, *Non generant aquilæ columbas*, I really don't see why *daws* should have the privilege!)—persecuted me to death last season, and then hunted me from Almack's to the Marches of Wales, simply because a charming daughter of hers was secretly engaged to a worthy young fellow of a parson,—(the rector of our parish,)—whose pretensions I had the good nature to cover under the shadow of my wings.—Lady Askham, who considered everything law and gospel that was proposed by my father's son, used to sanction the most delicious greenwood strolls or boatings on the Eden, which served to bring together, *en partie carrée* young Scotney and his fair Sophia, and your humble servant with his darling Titania."—

"In requital of her meanness, may she live to see her daughter cutting bread and butter, like Werther's Charlotte, for half-a-dozen parsonic olive branches!" cried Cecil. "But as to *you*, Del, if you allow this little glowworm of yours to be pecked out of the

moss and carried off by some night-bird of evil omen, while *you* are butterflying here in Paris, I shall consider that you deserve much worse!"—

"It will end so,—I foresee that it will end so!"—cried Lord Delvyn,—with a petulant sigh;—"for now Lina is an heiress, hang me if I shall ever find courage to tell her all that has been passing in my heart!—Such is the confounded re-action of the manœuvring of those match-making mammas;—teaching one first to mistrust *their* purposes,—and then, one's own!"—

The return of Napoleon from Elba, luckily put a period to these perplexities of heart;—for lest he should end by being shipwrecked between such a Scylla and Charybdis as "Vake," and another Léontine,—Lord Delvyn, instead of going round by Toulouse, immediately hurried off to Dover with Lady Ormington and her son.

True to his antipathies, however, he fled from the glare and tumult of the London season, to the land whose interests he was shortly about to represent in parliament.—And though of *him* Lord Lynchmore had failed to make his customary inquiry of—"What he intended to do for Ireland?"—Delvyn soon manifested his good intentions by a careful and deliberate tour through her provinces,—a favour which most Irish noblemen extend only to Italy or the Rhine.—He arrived at Hexham to meet his family in the autumn, more accurately acquainted with the statistics and resources of his native country, than the majority of those who have vexed the dull ear of a drowsy parliament by clamouring for redress of her wrongs under cover of her ragged mantle,—which, tattered as it is, they contrive to convert for their own use into a comfortable wrap-rascal.

He had not, however, been many days restored to the adoration of his parents and tormenting of Lady Hester and Lady Harriet concerning his growing dandyism and Parisian refinement, before he heartily congratulated himself on his self-government in having refrained from all demonstration of feeling towards the idol of his boyish love; for Selina, now on the verge of womanhood, beautiful as an angel and an object of universal worship, was so completely changed in her deportment towards him, as to authenticate all the maleficent influences usually ascribed to the ascendancy of the molten calf.—Though with his parents more respectful than ever, though with his sisters affectionate as their own Emilia,—towards *him*, lest he should entertain designs upon her houses and lands or court her *pour les beaux yeux de sa cassette*, she exhibited the most freezing reserve.—Such at least was *his* interpretation of the singular alteration in her manners.

The result was, as might be naturally expected, that though his indignation found vent in a thousand secret apostrophes against the baseness of female nature, and the strangeness that one so young, so fair, so active in benevolence, so much in charity with all and

everything around her, should harbour so mean a quality as sordid suspicion,—he became ten thousand times more in love!—Never had Philip Askham (in those better days of his nature, ere the leprosy of worldliness extended its crocodile scales over his heart)—ridden so recklessly over briar and bramble,—through wild ravine and furzy gap, across the solitudes of Eden Chase, making the echoes vocable, like Orlando in the Forest of Arden, with the name of his ladye-love!—Never had William Scotney, in the milder paroxysms of his parsonic attachment, so barbarously be-rhymed the white cliffs of the Eden, as the sonnets of the disappointed Delvyn!—

Had Selina smiled upon any happier man, or conversed more frankly with some other pretender to her smiles, he would doubtless have made a victim of him on the spot.—But there was nobody to kill!—Except Scotney, the Pastor fido of Sophy Askham and Edenbourne,—and Dr. Boswell, now the happy husband of Winifred Gwatkin,—not a creature in beaver and broadcloth, except Moran and the piano-forte tuner, ever passed the precincts of the Lodge!—

The following spring, which carried the young heiress far into her seventeenth year, Lady Uppingham, compassionating the seclusion of her life, invited her to pass some time at Uppingham House; proposing since the peculiar circumstances in which she was placed seemed to put forward the hour-hand of her years,—to present her at court.—For in the opinion of all her friends, an early marriage,—which need not be the less prudent for being early,—would afford the best security for the happiness of the unprotected Selina.

But to her beloved seclusion she still faithfully adhered!—"I am perfectly happy,—perfectly contented here,"—pleaded she, in reply to their gracious persuasions. "I might lose but *could* not gain in self-contentment, by an encounter with the struggles of the world."

Even when Edward, at the suggestion of her uncle, (whom she had never invited to the Lodge, and who was eager to delight his eyes by the sight of that developed beauty described by her brother as exceeding that of the lost Evelyn,) besought her to come to town "like other people," and enjoy the pleasures appropriate to her birth and fortune, Selina was not to be persuaded. She contented herself with replying to *him* as to the Hardynges and Middlemores,—that "at present she had no desire to quit the Lodge."

For to Edward had never been confided that terrible,—that heart-breaking secret,—which the malice of Philip Askham had branded like a stigma of shame on her young heart:—that the legitimacy of their birth was contestable, and might sooner or later be set aside!

Such was the cause of her reserve towards Lord Delvyn,—to whom her heart was secretly pledged by those bonds of early affection which no subsequent predilection supersedes.—*Such* the

motive of her obstinate self-seclusion. She would aspire to no distinctions,—she would submit to have no distinctions *assigned* her, which might afterwards be withheld as a reproach.

Before the year was over, indeed, she had a pretext in family mourning for postponing the period of her introduction into society.—The newspapers announced the happy close of the lingering illness of Lady Anastasia de Bayhurst, at a secluded seat belonging to Lord Grandison, on the western coast; adding a pompous list of dukes, duchesses, and peers of every grade, who would be placed in mourning by her decease!—

Of those who perused the paragraph, a few observed that “they always fancied she had died two years before: or was divorced, or separated, *or something?*”—a few, piously remarked that “as she had long been too great an invalid to go out, her death must be a happy release;”—a few (including Helen Middlemore) wondered whether Sir Hugh would marry again;—and shortly afterwards, *not* a few remarked how *very* well Lady Grandison looked in velvet and jet!—Horace Trevor protesting that mourning was the real *eau de Jouvence*, and had made her quite young again!—

Not a member of the set at Grandison House,—nay, *no one* but the Hardynges and the amiable family at Holmehurst, gave a tear to her memory!—Her father, though he had protected her to the last, knew that, from the poignancy of her mental sufferings, and the disorder they had engendered, she was better in her grave:—and who was there among the great and gay to note with indignant sympathy how many charms, how many excellencies had been sacrificed in her person to the selfishness and heartlessness of fashion?—At eight-and-twenty,—still beautiful, still capable of diffusing happiness around her, and perfecting the good gifts which nature had so lavishly bestowed,—she sank into the grave unlamented, ay, even by the exiled *roué* who had been the first to insinuate the worm into the bud, and who was now quaffing at a foreign court the lees of the cup of Circe!—

Not that there existed further occasion for his sojourn abroad. It was wholly the result of choice. For the moment that, by a satisfactory winding up of Sir Erasmus's estate, the executor ascertained the residue to be considerable beyond his utmost expectations, he opposed no further obstacle to Miss de Bayhurst's desire to discharge at once the liabilities of her stepfather, which she had previously resolved to defray progressively out of her income. Without further reference therefore either to the obliger or obliged, the settlement was speedily completed between their respective men of business; and Philip Askham stood clear in the world. And though, including the advances on the Askham estates, the sum of 14,500 *l.* might be considered a large excess for a man whose patrimonial fortune amounted to five, and who had never been accused of a generous action or charitable deed, Mr. Moran considered his

ward to escape on easy terms, in having only half that sum to disburse.

The advantage attained by Philip Askham, on the other hand, might be estimated at treble the purchase; not alone by redeeming his credit from obloquy and restoring his freedom of action; but by piquing the family pride of his brother Percy into an extension of grace, by charging the Edenbourne estates with an annuity of five hundred a year, of which he was immediately to enter upon the enjoyment.

It is true that the other brothers of Lord Askham required nothing at his hands.—Henry could draw at sight upon the nation; and Claude and Richard were making their way in their professions, with the zeal, discretion, and good faith which constitute after all the noblest patrimony; while Edmund had long been the especial charge of Lord Middlemore, of whose father he was the godson.

The compunctious generosity of Lord Askham might however arise from the information Dr. Boswell thought it necessary to impart, (in reply to his lordship's angry murmurs against being sent so often to Cheltenham,) that his liver being seriously attacked, it would be as well if the interests of his family were secured by the early arrangement of his affairs.—For thirteen years of the habitual indulgence, far worse than accidental excess,—the boozy intemperance of a man ill at ease in his affairs, and ill at ease with his conscience,—had so completely undermined his constitution, that had any friend besides "Vake" ever visited his deserted fireside, at Eden Castle, he must have noticed with regret, the tremulous hand,—oppressed breath,—eyes enlarged and lustreless,—swollen ankles, and sallow cheeks, of him who was accounted one of the handsomest young men of the day, at the time he went round by Toulouse.

The act of liberality towards Philip, therefore, which set the "broken dandy lately on his travels," free from his encumbrances, resulted perhaps from the hope of conciliating a friend for his children, in the nearest heir to the estates;—and his intentions might have undergone some modification, could he have suspected either that his brother had visited Verdun in person, to search out registers and examine witnesses, in the hope of invalidating his foolish marriage and establishing the illegitimacy of the little monkey in the coat and cravat;—or that, to his infinite disappointment, Philip had found all as fast and formal as the church, the *Mairie*, and Captain Wegg, (the particular friend of Mdle. Léontine,) could make it.

When the next editions of the Peerage bore tidings to the world that

"Percy, fourth Lord Askham, had married at Verdun, June 4th, 1808, Mademoiselle Marie Clotilde Hermione Léontine Boulanger; and that the issue of the marriage consisted of

"Philip Wegg, born Sept. 10, 1810,"

there was no gainsaying the accuracy of a statement, which had the decency to leave unmentioned the elder girls.

The vexations of poor Lord Askham's position, and the miseries of his comfortless home, probably assisted the increasing stiffness of the nightly punch prepared for him by Vake, to counteract both the waters of Cheltenham and the prescriptions of Dr. Boswell;—for in the Peerage of the year following, “Philip Wegg, fifth Lord Askham,” figured in place of Percy the fourth; and when another year expired, Clotilde Hermione Léontine, Dowager Lady Askham, was announced as remarried to Capt. Wegg, R.N., (the well-bred Peerage concluding, that the unaccountable initials R.M., must have been forwarded to it by mistake!) fourth son of Cornelius Wegg, of Mount Wegg, in the county of Tipperary.

The happy pair thus suitably united, are not only still extant, but the annual fancy-ball given at Cheltenham by Lieut. Colonel Wegg and the Dowager Lady Askham, is one of the grandest affairs of the season in that city of preposterousities; and though “Vake” has considerably transferred to her ladyship the nightly punch which was supposed to have terminated the mortal cares of her deceased lord, the dose appears to have lost its virtue; for every Sunday of every London season, the flaming family coach of the Dowager may be seen parading Hyde Park; its crimson pannels adorned with armorial bearings that would nearly cover the Askham estates; while at such popular assemblages as Polish fêtes and Spitalfields balls, her ladyship's blaze of diamonds, and glare of rouge, and above all, disconnexion from society, render her an object of universal interrogation.

The young Lord Askham, indeed, in order to evade the impertinent interference of his officious stepfather, resides chiefly abroad. But when occasionally in London, his time is usually divided between watching the ballet through his *lorgnon* from his place in the stalls; after previously seeing it rehearsed with the naked eye.

Among the persons most gratified on hearing that Philip Askham's affairs were arranged by the joint liberality of his brother and step-daughter, was young Edward de Bayhurst.

“You have done exactly what I would, myself, dear Lina, if I enjoyed *your* independence!”—cried he to his sister. “The fellow can never again say or *suppose* that either ourselves, or—one of those belonging to us,—are under pecuniary obligation to him!”

“Miss de Bayhurst has acted nobly,—as she seems to do on all occasions,” observed, on the other hand, the Marquis of Uppingham, when Margaret apprised him of the altered prospects which her brother had communicated in a letter from Töplitz, as if a mere item of the news of the day. “But nothing that has been done for Philip,—nothing that *could* be done for him,—would render him other than what I described him to you sixteen years ago,—a poor creature!—Not a quality in his selfish nature to encourage cultiva-

tion.—The surface is polished—but all is hollow within!”—

“Still, he might surely do better for himself than he is doing,” rejoined Margaret,—“Philip has good abilities, and is well-bred and agreeable.—The Regent never sees me without inquiring after his welfare.”

“Which does more honour to His Royal Highness than to Philip! Yet I would venture a *maravedi* that, were your brother in the household, within twelve months he would contrive to give mortal offence!—A man so devoted to self is sure in the end to wound the self-love of other people.”

“And yet,” pleaded Margaret, (to whom her brother was peculiarly endeared by one of the few disinterested actions of which he had ever been guilty,—his interposition on occasion of her marriage,) “I cannot help thinking that if Philip had persisted in a public career, his abilities would have carried him further than even Henry.”—

“He gave up his office only because deficient in the qualities that have created the fortune of his brother.—The career of Henry has been governed in private life by a strict sense of propriety; and in public, by undeviating steadiness of purpose.—The first duty of a public man is *clearly* to understand his own mind; the next, *firmly* to work out its suggestions.—Incessant practice, which strengthens the hand of the surgeon, strengthens also the aim of the politician,—till both become unerring.—By consistency and perseverance, Henry has at length *become* what he once *pretended* to be!”—

“Yet even *his* ambitions had a selfish origin!” said Lady Uppingham,—still seeking some defence for Philip.—

“All our ambitions have, more or less, a selfish origin,” replied her husband,—“But the self-worship which *I* call criminal, is that which is indulged solely for our personal gratification, and at the cost or to the disadvantage of our neighbours,—I have heard you, dearest Margaret, ascribe your brother’s resignation of his place to conscientiousness of political principle. A gratuitous apology!—Political principle had as little to do with it, as with his choice of a waistcoat. He became a Whig simply because liberal politics did him most honour in the gay and showy set with which he associated; and if Carlton House or Grandison House had chosen to profess Mahomedanism, thenceforward no better Mussulman than Philip!—Forgive me, dearest little wife!” added he, with a smile, on discerning the mortified expression of Lady Uppingham’s countenance.—“Be assured that, unless to *you*, not a syllable have I ever uttered to his prejudice;—nor *even* to you, till I saw him fairly re-embarked on the golden stream of fortune.”

On Cecil Danby’s return to England, shortly afterwards, among the numerous questions addressed to him by the idle catechizers at White’s, was whether, in the course of his travels, he had encountered Philip Askham.—

"I thought you might have met him at Naples, last winter?"—said Horace Trevor. "Since you went away, my dear Cis, Askham has been set on his legs again,—or rather *fallen* upon them,—as he always manages to do!—To his own amazement and that of his creditors, his wife's daughter, on coming into an immense fortune, paid his debts!—Lady Anastasia, too, as soon as he got tired of her, did him the favour to die.—And Lord Askham has been lately generous enough to make a settlement on him, which, with tolerable economy, will find him in shoe-strings and eau de Cologne!"

"And the stepdaughter with the immense fortune?"—inquired Danby, who, having recently parted with Delvyn in the Mediterranean, had promised to send him all the intelligence he could obtain of the hard-hearted object of his love;—"what may have become of *her*?"

"Looking out for an heiress eh, Cis?"—cried Lesly, contemplating with an air of impertinent superiority, the sun-burned face of the somewhat travel-stained Coxcomb. "It won't do, my boy, it won't do!—We have *all* had a try;—and all, in vain."

"But I understood that Miss de Bayhurst spent her whole life in the country?"—observed Cecil.

"There!—He has positively been *aux informations* already! You forget, my dear fellow, that *in* the country she inhabits, stands Hexham Hall; and that Lynchmore has now Lunardelli!"

"*Well*?"—

"*Well*!—Are you so completely *désorienté* as to be ignorant that whoever secures Lunardelli, secures *us*?"—cried Trevor, with a pitying shrug. "Lynchmore kept open house last winter. The Carlton hounds are *now* prodigiously the fashion!"

"The heiress, then, is a queen and huntress, chaste and fair?—*La Diane*, not *à la biche*, but *au renard*?"

"God forbid!—But she has always been intimate with the Lynchmores; and at Hexham, the Cynosure of neighbouring eyes is easily approachable."

"Quæ forma, ut se tibi semper
Imputet?"

observed Cecil Danby, with his usual affectation of pedantry.

"*Entre nous*, the Carlton hounds have been adopted as a pretext by many a fellow far more eager after the heiress, than the fox!"—added Lesly, aside to Cecil,—with a sly indication of the head towards their friend Trevor.

"And in spite of all, she intends to remain the Virgin Queen of Edenbourne Lodge?"—persisted the inquisitive Coxcomb.

"*C'est selon*!—*Reste à voir*, what she will say to the Cecil of Cecils!"—cried Trevor, with a sarcastic smile.—"She was certainly cruel to young Croydon, the Duke of Sandbeck's heir,—whom his cunning grandmother sent down to Hexham expressly to make

up to her;—and Camelford declares that she refused Shoreham, —and Shoreham declares, that she refused Camelford;—and what is stranger still, for once, both speak truth!”

“Young De Bayhurst, who is going it rather fast at Oxford, gives out that his sister has determined never to marry.—But I suppose it is as a bait to the Jews!”—observed Trevor, picking his teeth.

“Edward de Bayhurst need scarcely have recourse to the Jews, and still less to *doing* them!”—cried Lord Middlemore, who now joined the party; “for his uncle has not a week to live!—My brother-in-law, Hardyng, who has just come up from a visit in his neighbourhood, told me yesterday he was given over.”—

“And we all know,” added Trevor, “that

Un oncle est un caissier donné par la nature!”

And this statement was substantially as correct as the mutual accusations of Lords Shoreham and Camelford!—Sir Hugh de Bayhurst was not only on his deathbed, but solely supported through his sufferings, and comforted in his gloomy hours of self-accusation and despair, by the angelic care of Selina.—On receiving a private intimation from William Scotney of the serious nature of his illness, and that he had not courage to renew those invitations which his niece had so often declined, (for since his separation from poor Lady Anastasia, she had never visited Bayhurst,) she lost not a moment in hastening to accord to a contrite sufferer the concession she had perseveringly withheld from the triumphant man of the world.—Nor did the presence of even Edward,—his future representative,—his pride,—his heir,—appear to impart half the comfort which he derived from contemplating once more the heavenly countenance of his niece.—

“Words of kindness from *her* lips,” murmured the enfeebled man, “sound almost like words of pardon from those of Evelyn!”—

One morning, when his condition seemed to have undergone a considerable change for the worse, Selina ventured to despatch her brother to Holmehurst, unsuspected by the invalid, to solicit a friendly visit from Dr. Scotney, which she trusted might lead to results of the happiest tendency; and on her assuming Edward’s place beside the sick couch, the dying man profited by the opportunity to entreat, with feeble but earnest accents, that she would promise to exercise her influence over the future master of Bayhurst, in favour of its tenantry and poor.—

“I sometimes fear that the duties about to devolve upon Edward will scarcely weigh sufficiently on his volatility of nature,”—continued the sick man;—adding in a lower voice, “and yet the faults of two preceding generations render works of charity and acts of justice a double duty in my successor, who will have to accomplish them, not only as a matter of duty, but as a sacrifice of expiation!”

Apprehensive of the consequences of his growing perturbation, Selina attempted to soothe him by assurances of the excellent intentions of her brother.

“The best intentions become as the smoking flax under the influence of the evil passions of our nature!”—replied the excited Sir Hugh.—“The energies of my own youth were wasted in the creation of torments for the embitterment of my middle age;—and hatred,—envy,—jealousy,—revenge,—have been the portion and occupation of one who, with a better regulated mind, might have secured the happiest enjoyments of this life. Self,—self,—was the object of my worship; and every casual wound inflicted on my self-love, created a nest of asps, which I cherished for the punishment of other people, but which preyed only on myself!”

“Compose yourself, dear uncle,”—faltered his niece, startled and alarmed by his vehemence,—“compose yourself, dear uncle!—*Those* sufferings are over now!”

“Those sufferings, Selina, are eternal!”—persisted the self-convicted man;—“for where they cease on earth, it is to give place to the worm that never dies, and the fire that is not quenched!—Shudder not, my child,—shudder not, my gentle Selina!—*You*—worthy to be the child of Edward and Evelyn,—have no need of a lesson so terrible. To *you* I have no words of warning to impart!—Only a parting prayer, Selina, only a parting prayer!—that you will remember in *yours* the name of one on whose grave the grass might otherwise refuse to grow; and exercise such influence over your brother as may render him an honour to our ancient name.”—

It was a critical moment for Miss de Bayhurst; for, unless she *now* opened her heart to her uncle, the cares which, for some years past, had lain so heavy on it, might never, *never* be removed!—

“I will obey you,” said she—“trust me, to the very utmost I will obey you.—The poor of Bayhurst shall not want a friend.—But you speak of Edward as your heir,—as your successor.—Is it absolutely certain that no other claimant may arise?”—

“Another claimant,—I do not understand you?” said the suffering man,—a look of bewilderment succeeding to his air of supplication. “What other *could* supersede the only son of my brother?”—

“I had understood,—I was once assured,”—faltered Selina,—every vestige of colour forsaking her cheek, and her quivering lips almost refusing their office,—“that no evidence existed—of—of the *marriage* of my parents?”

“PHILIP ASKHAM!”—shouted the dying De Bayhurst,—in a voice at once so loud and hoarse, that Selina trembled as she listened.—“No living being but that wretch could have dared to breathe such

blasphemy into the ears of Evelyn's child!—Tell me, Selina, (and draw near and give me your hand, that I may feel some kindred thing beside me, now that human love is all that remains,)—tell me that it was that pitiful creature,—that enemy of all my happiness—who dared to—”

He paused,—his exhausted breath seemed incapable of giving utterance to those bitter words.

“But it is not *true*?”—cried Selina, grasping fervently between her own the cold hand extended towards her. “Say only—*only*—that it is not *true*!”—

“False as his own nature!”—burst as by a last effort from the lips of the expiring De Bayhurst.—“Welcome, welcome!”—he exclaimed, as at that moment Dr. Scotney appeared on the threshold of his chamber,—beckoned in by Selina, on seeing the door gently opened by her brother. “You are come, I doubt not, Scotney, upon an errand of peace, to cheer the departure of a dying sinner.—But be it your previous office to satisfy the fears of this anxious child.—Edward,—Selina,—draw near, my children, and thank the zeal of the good man by your side; through whose zealous aid I was enabled to authenticate the lawful marriage of your parents.”

“But *who* ever presumed to dispute it?”—cried the intemperate Edward,—fury flashing in his eyes.

“Evidence was for a time wanting, such as the law justly esteems indispensable,”—interposed Dr. Scotney, with a mild firmness to which, at that solemn moment, the indignant boy attempted no rejoinder,—“But all is now made clear.”

“Watch over him, and protect him, and moderate his impetuous nature, when I am gone!”—said the dying man, extending his hand thankfully to the pastor of Holmehurst:—“*not* as my nephew—*not* as the last of the Savilles;—but as the son of one whose goodness you appreciated,—who was a victim on earth, as she is now an angel in heaven,—poor Evelyn,—poor—*poor* Evelyn Monson!”—

With mild but earnest exhortations, the christian pastor attempted to detach the solicitude of the dying man from the cares and yearnings of this world.—But it was too late.—Selina, who felt the hand of her uncle which she held between her own, grow suddenly nerveless and relaxed as the name of her mother faintly escaped his lips, was the first to point out, by falling upon her knees in prayer, that all was over,—that the erring heart was now passionless,—the wandering looks fixed in death;—and all that remained for the compassionate friend who had hastened to Bayhurst in the fruitless hope of creating, even at the eleventh hour, a happier frame of mind, was to commend the departed to the mercy of Heaven, and close his eyes for ever!—

“But I don't exactly understand, my dear child,” said old Susan,

when, some weeks afterwards at the Lodge, Selina attempted to gratify her motherly interest in the fortunes of Sir Edward, ("the beautifullest babby that ever saw the light,") by an account of all that had occurred at Bayhurst, on the accession of its new owner,—"I don't exactly understand why *you*, who set such little store by such matters, should seem so pleased at Sir Edward's succeeding to his family fortune and honours, according to his good right and title so to do?"

To which remonstrance of the aged friend who, in spite of her lawn cap and apron, and humble vocation, was so much more like a mother than a menial,—Miss de Bayhurst replied by unfolding for the first time the story of those cruel fears and anxieties, which, for some years past, had encompassed her prosperous dwelling with a hedge of thorns!—

"It serves you right,—it only serves you just right!" sobbed out the faithful old nurse, to the utter surprise of Selina, who had anticipated an apostrophe of a very different nature.—"To think that you should go to keep such a pack of misery to yourself,—without the least inkling to one who loved you as if you were her own,—and fancied she knew every thought of your mind;—and who, by a single word, could have put an end to your uneasiness."

"I often longed to open my heart to you,"—said Selina, desirous to pacify her resentment before she attempted further interrogation.—"But the subject was so sacred,—it seemed such sacrilege to infer that any living being could dispute the marriage of my mother."—

"Those missing certificates," interrupted Susan, still reprovngly shaking her head, "were never further off, Miss Selina, than in my old morocco pocket-book with the silver clasps, which poor dear Captain Saville made me a present of when you was born!"—

"And I, who have had it twenty times in my hands!"—cried Selina.—"You told me, when I was a child, that it contained your mother's wedding ring;—and seeing papers in it, I concluded them to be family relics of your own."

"When Master Percy was born, my dear,"—resumed Susan, (in a low voice, as if she fancied there was still a Philip Askham at hand to overhear!) "the table in my poor dear lady's dressing-room was covered with papers,—which I knew were of the greatest consequence, but had other cares then on my hands than to interfere with.—But somehow or another, (you'll excuse my plain speaking,) my mind always misgrudged me about Mr. Askham in regard to any matter in which your's and Master Edward's interests were concerned; and the first night I had to sit up in the dressing-room after all was safe with your poor dear mamma, happening to see a direction in her handwriting on a paper that was lying at my feet,—I took it up and read it;—and finding what it contained, for safety sake, removed the contents, to restore them to her when she

got well again. She never *did* get well!—that is, never so well but that,—when I was about to put into her hand something that would so sadly bring to mind my first poor dear master, I had not courage to fluster her. And so, I put it off and off, till it was too late. And then, who was I to trust them to? Not, certainly, to Mr. Askham! So I laid them carefully by, certain that if they were ever wanted, they would be inquired after. For how could I possibly guess, my dear, that anything so sure and certain, (and well known to those whom it signified should know,) as that my poor lady was married by license in Rochester Cathedral, where the captain's company was in recruiting quarters, would ever come to be called in question! I always intended when Master Edward grew a little less flighty, to give *him* the certificates. But of late, truth to tell, I have never thought of them at all!"

Selina made proof of her usual generous forbearance in abstaining to acquaint the poor old woman of the many evils of which her oversolicitude had been the origin;—evils which, on *one* point at least, Miss de Bayhurst regarded as irreparable!

For what occasion would ever be afforded her to insinuate to Lord Delvyn that the coldness,—the hauteur,—the reserve,—by which she had rendered impossible the proposals so often at the moment of escaping his lips,—had been produced not by pride, but humbleness,—not by indifference, but true affection? He had quitted the neighbourhood,—he had quitted the kingdom; and Lord Lynchmore had been of late continually joking about Venetian Countesses and Italian Principesse as the probable cause of his prolonged tour; so that, thanks to their miserable misunderstanding, before she saw him again, he would perhaps be the husband of another!

While all the country, therefore, was envying the fair proprietor of an estate which good management was gradually raising to the level of the now shrunken and deteriorated property of Eden Castle, Selina was vainly attempting to find in the multiplicity and activity of her country pursuits, a refuge from the pangs of disappointed affection! She had no one to blame but herself! Had she been more candid with poor Susan, or had she controlled her pride sufficiently to come to an explanation with him who, she was persuaded, had *once* loved her with unqualified attachment, all, *all* might have gone well! But her secret grief was not the less poignant for the consciousness that it was of her own creation.

On one point, however, Selina's troubles were diminished.—Hitherto, under the conviction that she was never to be Lord Delvyn's wife, she had studiously avoided at Hexham every reminiscence likely to refresh the impressions of her early love.—She had even forbore to fix her eyes on his beautiful portrait by Lawrence, which constituted the chief ornament of the old hall; and whenever Lady Lynchmore indulged her maternal vanity by anecdotes of the

popularity, or valour, or merit of her son, *endeavoured* to turn a deaf ear.

Lady Hester de Lacy was even forced to reprove her for unkindness to a fine old Irish setter belonging to her brother, which was fond of thrusting its shaggy head into her hand!

“You shouldn’t be so ill-natured to poor Bryan during his master’s absence, Lina,” said she, “for he is all we have left to remind us of Del!”—

But now, everything was altered; and poor Bryan’s black muzzle was constantly seen resting on the knee or velvet dress of the heiress; and when staying at Hexham, she deserted her usual place at the breakfast table, on pretence of a draught from the door, which she had never found inconvenient till an excuse was wanting for stationing herself where she might command a view of that dear picture,—whose open countenance seemed to shed sunshine upon her heart. The pretext she assigned, however, for so often turning her eyes in that direction, was one that her well-known love of paintings rendered plausible:—*viz.* her regret that Lawrence should have done such inadequate justice to the beauties of old Bryan, who was represented in attendance upon his master, with not quite the pencil of a Landseer.

In short, poor Lina was in love; and, like other girls of eighteen, whether heiresses or not, as soft as wax under the ascendancy of that glowing influence.—Flattering herself that her manoeuvres were unobserved, and that the secret of her attachment was buried deep in her own heart, she tried to distract her attention from her perplexities by devoting her leisure to preparing Percy for the school that was to prepare him for Eton, which was to prepare him for the guards; for his choice of a profession had not been wanting in encouragement from the inclination of Selina and Edward towards the position in life occupied by their lamented father.

Even while thus employed, however, she managed to secure occasional tidings of the absent one, by having one or other of his sisters an inmate under her roof.

“Tell Lord Delvyn that if he persist in remaining abroad, we shall try to forget him as completely as he seems to have forgotten *us!*”—said she, one day, with crimson cheek and faltering accents, to Lady Harriet de Lacy, who, when addressing a letter from Edenbourne Lodge to her brother, had insisted upon a message to “poor Del.” To which few words, the lively girl saw fit to add, at her own suggestion, “it would, however, be somewhat difficult for your little wife to forget you; for she is not only continually inquiring about the probability of your return, but your old favourite, poor Bryan, whom she has most unwarrantably begged of my father, never leaves her side.”

Were we to hazard a statement of the exact number of days in which after the despatch of this letter to Naples, Lord Lynchmore’s

son and heir contrived to reach Hexham Hall, some officious critic who has swam in a gondola, would be sure to bring forward his road-book experience to prove the thing to be impossible; and we should be having the “great facts” of John Murray and Mrs. Starke flung like milestones in our teeth!—Suffice it, therefore, that when the happiest of men, (snatching at so much as a single leaf that could be supposed to belong to an olive branch,) really *did* arrive,—it was on a beautiful evening in May that he made his appearance at the Lodge;—and that the lilacs were in full bloom and the nightingales in full song in the sequestered shrubbery in which the explanation of the lovers took place.

“You deserve that I should make you the very worst husband in the world, Lina!”—whispered Lord Delvyn to the fair girl who hung upon his arm, while old Bryan stalked majestically by their side.—“How could you ever fancy that such a difficulty,—even had it existed,—would make the smallest,—slightest,—faintest difference in my attachment!”—

So spake the Viscount; and his grave rebuke
Severe in youthful beauty, added grace
Ineffable.

But still more convincing was the affectionate rejoinder of Selina!—

“It was because I knew that it would *not*, I avoided putting your generosity to the trial!” pleaded she. “Consider, too, what might have been the objections of Lord Lynchmore.”

“Not of *Lord* Lynchmore, dearest,—for *his* heart is as warm as Midsummer.—But I will not quite answer for Lord Lynchmore’s lady. My poor mother has caught from Lady Grandison’s jargon the horrid word ‘connexion!’ which, thank goodness, she can never exercise against *us*!—I *may* say *us* now,—mayn’t I, dearest Lina?—Mayn’t I, my faithful old Bryan?—Poor fellow! he seems to know what happy dogs we both are!—How very little I imagined that, during my absence, the faithful old brute was taking care of my darling little wife.”—

And so, *de fil en aiguille*, this happiest of weddings was at length celebrated at Edenbourne;—and William Scotney was the parson, and Harriet and Hester de Lacy the bridesmaids,—and Sir Edward de Bayhurst gave away the bride,—and Sophia, now the Hon. Mrs. William Scotney, presided at the wedding breakfast.—A happy home had already been provided for Mrs. Markham with the sons whom the noble competence secured by her pupil, enabled to settle in life;—and even Mr. Moran had not a fault to find with the match,—not even with the settlements made by Lord Lynchmore upon his daughter-in-law.—

Never had such a peal as shook the old tower of Edenbourne church on the departure of the bride and bridegroom for Lynchmore Castle, been rung in honour of the Askhams!—Never had the popu-

lace of the Market Place huzzaed so heartily as for her whom they had seen expand from childhood into the fulness of every womanly virtue and charm.—The bonfire on Eden Down was twice the height of that which excited the unlucky comments of poor Sir Erasmus, on occasion of Lady Uppingham's wedding; and though Cecil Danby, (who arrived from town to officiate as bridesman to Del,) ventured to whisper aside to his fastidious friend Lady Lynchmore, that white tabinet, though a highly patriotic wedding garment for the heiress, was none of the lightest,—no one else saw cause for blame. Old Susan was far from the only person present who protested that, since the world was a world, never had it contained a bride so lovely as Lord Delvyn's Selina!—

Even her tears excited no disapprobation;—for though she was giving her hand where her heart had long been bestowed,—and though her prospects were without speck or blemish,—the marriage vows she held so sacred were pronounced kneeling before an altar that consecrated the grave of her mother!

With respect to what the young couple “intended to do for Ireland,” though Lord Lynchmore for once refrained from asking the question,—their design was pretty evident;—to spend there as much time and money, as they could spare from their beloved Lodge; where, during their absence, old Moutiar and Susan, retained the care of the chapel and Eastfield.

It was arranged between Selina and Edward, though her charge of little Percy was limited by her mother's injunctions to the epoch of her marriage, that his vacations should be spent with the Delvyns,—till the young baronet should establish himself at Bayhurst on the attainment of his majority, with a steadiness affording security for the happiness of their adopted child.

CONCLUSION.

Dear reader—(yet away with false modesty!)—dear readers,—pluralissimé plural,—by thousands,—tens of thousands,—hundreds of thousands;—DEAR READERS,—you *all* know Philip Askham!—Ten months of every year, you see him daily in the window at White's,—dull,—dunny,—infirm of limb, and pasty of complexion,—vainly struggling to retain the air and outlines of youth; like some squalid lilac-bush in a London square, which every spring makes a painful attempt at florescence rendering its half-denuded branches yet more unsightly. The chronic rheumatism which he swears at

under the name of gout, is the cause of closing the doors and windows of that venerable academy of Chesterfieldism, till its atmosphere has become opprobriated by younger and more stirring members, as stuffy and insupportable.—But no less insupportable is the prolixity of this “oldest inhabitant,”—of the club;—whether in spelling the newspapers, or emitting the contents of those of last week as the pretended *on dits* of the day.

Whenever, indeed, in passing White's about five of the clock, you see Broughams dashing off like Cerito in her oblique step, from the door,—or cabriolets stealing away *à pas de loup* like Esler in the pantomime of a new ballet, while the *beau* window remains blank and featureless as the face of Young England staring around in search of Sir Robert, when he has stolen a march upon it during one of its long speeches or visionary trances, and assumed unobserved a position millions of miles above its head,—be assured that the house has been cleared by the effete and threadbare anecdotes of Philip Askham!—When the aspect of his now fretful face portends to those on whose shoulders his company is strapped like that of the old man of the sea;—a pointless story, having Self only for the hero, and commencing with, “I remember some years ago, when the Allied Sovereigns were in this country,” or “you remind me of a circumstance that occurred to Brummel and myself at Carlton House,”—no button strong enough to favour his fruitless endeavours to procure an audience.

Occasionally, indeed, some middle-aged man,—meaning to be good-natured towards one whom he remembers in his youth as one of the authorities of the spot,

(As thriving oaks ignoble broomsticks made
Now sweep the alley they were meant to shade,)

observes to the abhorrent youngsters, “Quiz him if you will;—but I remember the time when every man in London dressed at him and every woman for him!—Philip Askham was a man who commanded the fall of neckcloths and the rise of *stocks*!”

But such sorry bolstering affords poor consolation for one whose dinner invitations are now as thin and scattered as his meagre locks;—shunned by the old, as a disagreeable monument of their age;—by the wise, as an unsightly relic of the era of fribbledom;—and by the young, prosperous, and spirited, as a bore!—*Self*,—the early object of his worship,—is all, *all* that remains!—

Of the rest of our dramatis personæ, little remains to relate.—The young Marquis of Uppingham was married last week to his cousin Margaret Hardyng, by her uncle Dr. Scotney, the Dean of———, to the joy of her parents and the satisfaction of his amiable mother;—while Lady Selina de Lacy, who was presented last season, is understood to be engaged to the promising son of the Middlemores, one of the most rising members of the day.

Of the dowager Lady Lynchmore, as the mother-in-law of our own Selina, we forbear to speak; more especially as she has become what the fashionable world calls "serious;" and on her toilet-table

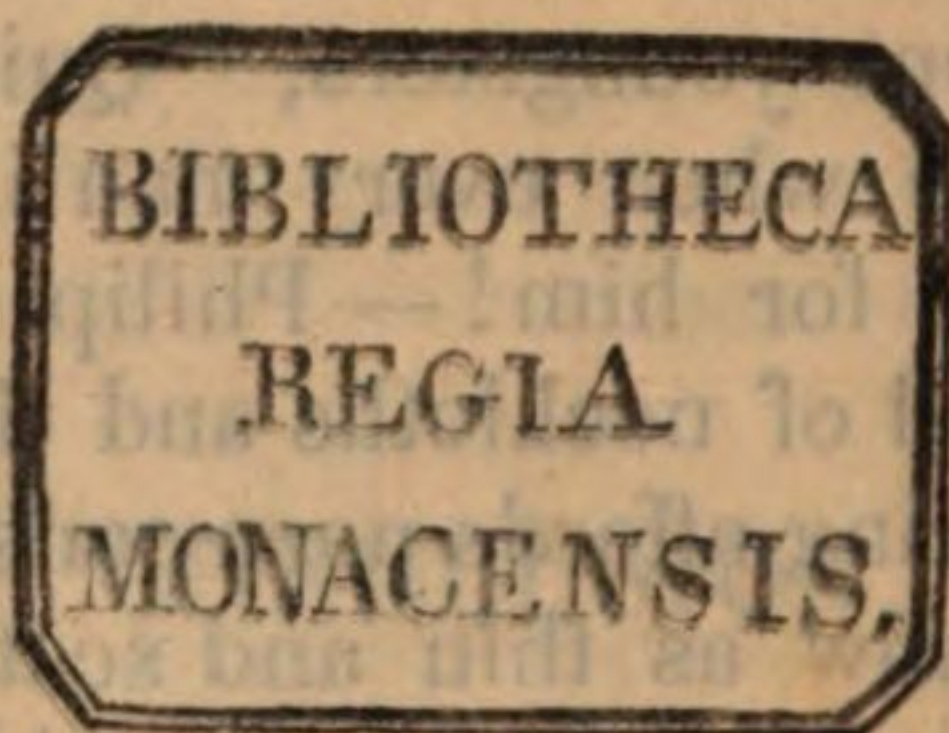
Together lie her prayer-book and her paint,
At once to improve the sinner and the saint!

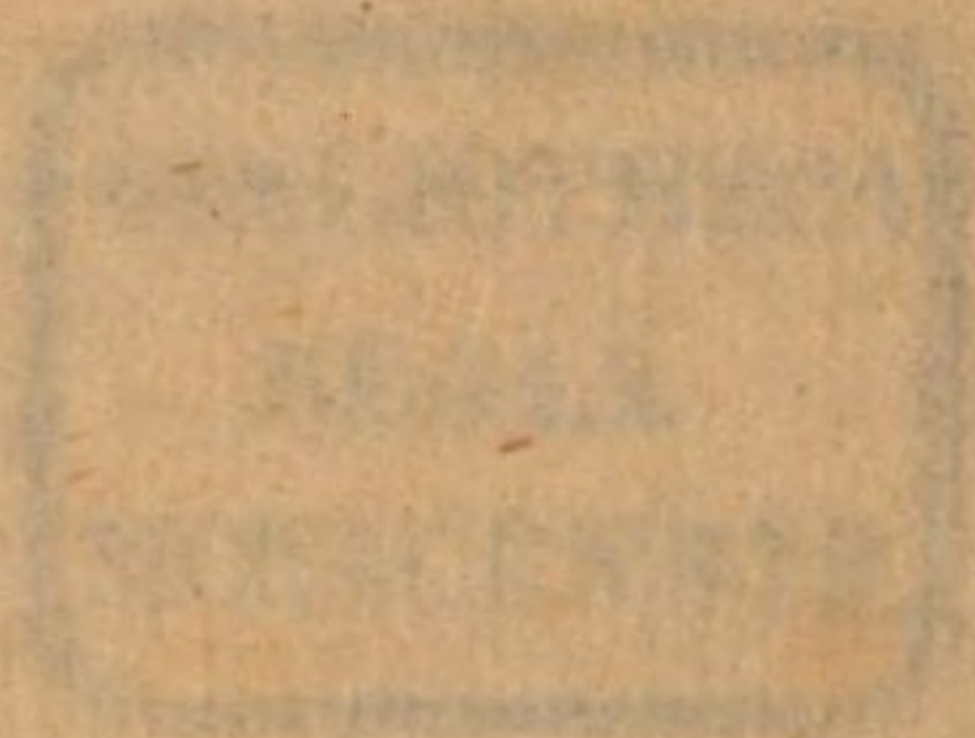
While as regards the individual who was once Henry Askham, and is now a leading member of the administration and the Upper House, for our *own* sakes, we refrain!—His speeches are the glory of the Times; and, as the tortoise which still sustains the world of letters under the name of Petrel, observed the other day to the noble Emily, (whose looks become brighter, like the sapphire skies to which we formerly compared them, with every revolving spring,) "As well attempt to batter down Mont Blanc with Perkins's steam-gun, as expect to unseat an administration substantiated by such solidity as his!"

And now, dear readers, a long farewell!—Afford a last proof of your good-will, by accepting a thousand heartfelt acknowledgements of your indulgence, in the name and on behalf of

CECIL and SELF!

THE END.







Self By the Author of 'Cecil'

Paris 1845

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